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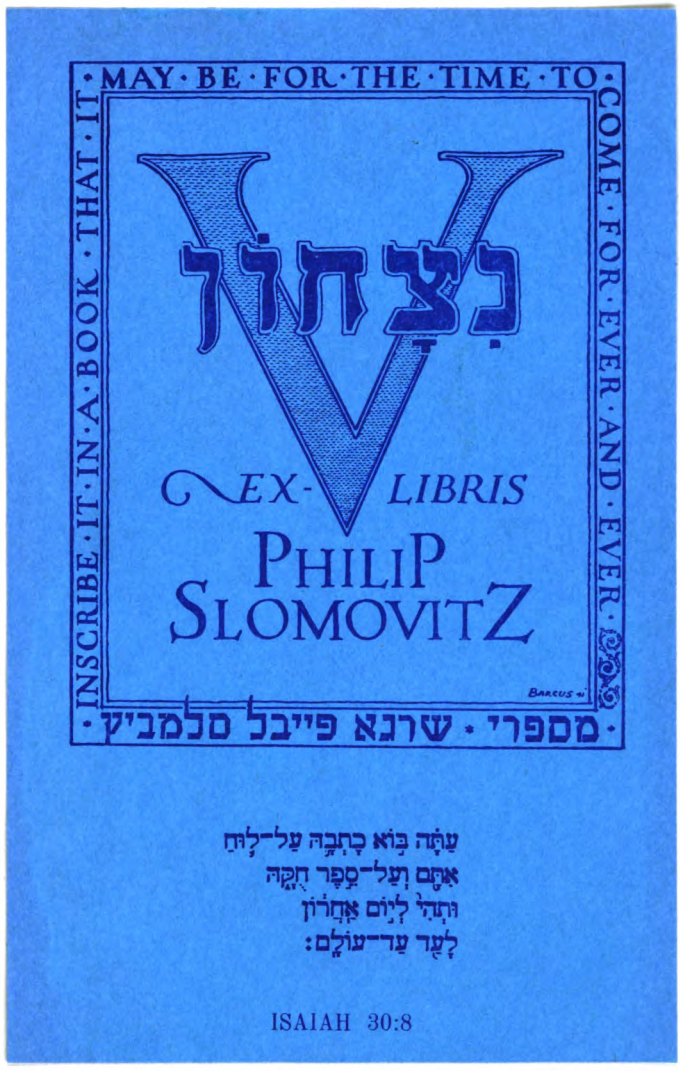
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HIMMLER

By the same author:

GOERING
TWILIGHT IN VIENNA
THE NAZIS AT WAR

HEINRICH HIMMLER—REICHSFUEHRER S.S.

WILLI FRISCHAUER

★

HIMMLER

THE EVIL GENIUS OF THE THIRD REICH

Boston · THE BEACON PRESS · 1953

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CONTENTS

PRELUDE		*page* 9
Chapter I	THE MISSING LINK	15
II	S.S.—SPACE SELLERS	22
III	THE BLOND BEAST	35
IV	DESTINATION DACHAU	47
V	THE GROWTH OF THE S.S.	59
VI	TRUE ARYAN VERSUS RITUAL MURDER	71
VII	THE OTHER HEINRICH	82
VIII	BATTLE FRONT: INNER GERMANY	95
IX	AUSTRIAN ADVENTURE	105
X	HIMMLER'S "HUMAN" RELATIONS	115
XI	THE S.S. STARTS THE WAR	124
XII	FOUNTAIN OF LIFE—AND DEATH	135
XIII	EXTERMINATION	148
XIV	THE DEATH-ROLL MOUNTS	162
XV	THANATOLOGY—THE SCIENCE OF KILLING	175
XVI	THE END OF HEYDRICH	188
XVII	"PAGE OF GLORY—NEVER TO BE WRITTEN"	200
XVIII	THE PEAK OF POWER	213
XIX	WAR LORD	225
XX	MELLOWING MONSTER	235
XXI	HEINRICH HITZINGER	252
BIBLIOGRAPHY		259
INDEX		261

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

HEINRICH HIMMLER	*Frontispiece*		
HIMMLER'S PARENTS	*facing page*		64
WITH HIS BROTHER GEBHARD	„	„	64
WITH GOERING	„	„	65
IN ROME	„	„	96
REVIEWING POLICE DETACHMENTS	„	„	96
WITH HEYDRICH IN VIENNA	„	„	97
REVIEWING AUSTRIAN POLICE DETACHMENTS	„	„	192
HITLER GREETING GERMAN STUDENTS IN PRAGUE	„	„	192
CONFERENCE ON REICH SECURITY	„	„	193
HIMMLER, HITLER AND GOERING WITH HEYDRICH'S SONS	„	„	193
WERNER GROTHMANN AND HEINZ MACHER	„	„	224
HIMMLER LYING DEAD	„	„	224
ERNST KALTENBRUNNER	„	„	225
FELIX KERSTEN	„	„	225

PRELUDE

IT WAS the evening of 21 May, 1945. From the screen of the little cinema in the Westphalian town of Lüneburg the familiar voice of Bing Crosby came crooning: "Going my way . . . ," and the men in khaki who listened to it were thoroughly enjoying themselves. They belonged to Britain's famous Second Army, and most of them were attached to Montgomery's headquarters not far from Lüneburg Heath, where he had recently accepted the surrender of Nazi Germany.

Edwin Austin, a burly sergeant-major from the London suburb of Barnes, was happily humming in tune with the American film-star when the performance was interrupted and a notice flashed across the screen: "Sergeant-major Austin of H.Q. Company," it said, "is requested to report to headquarters at once."

"I could guess what it meant," Edwin Austin told me when we discussed the events of the evening. "Obviously somebody was 'going my way'." The call which interrupted his evening's entertainment did not come entirely as a surprise to him. One of the tasks allotted to H.Q. Company and Austin was to deal with very important Nazi prisoners when they were brought to Lüneburg for interrogation. "I was a dustman in civilian life," he mused. "Curious that it should fall to me to handle this human rubbish!" The urgent summons indicated that another big fish had been caught in the allied net.

Yet Austin felt uneasy when he arrived back at No. 33 Uelzenerstrasse, the house in which headquarters had been installed. Right here a few days earlier he had guarded S.S. Obergruppenfuehrer (Upper Group Leader) Pruetzmann, commander of the so-called "Werwolf," the Nazi resistance movement against the allied occupation forces. Following instructions, Austin had searched his prisoner and quickly discovered a capsule containing poison such as every Nazi leader was known to carry on his body. But Pruetzmann had a second phial hidden in a cavity of his mouth and before Austin could stop him had crushed it with his teeth, swallowed the poison, to die a quick but painful death.

Austin was acutely conscious of his failure to preserve the life of this valuable prisoner from whom allied officers had hoped to

extract much information. It must not happen again. The safest way to avoid a repetition of the Pruetzmann incident, Austin thought, would be to knock out the next prisoner on arrival and to search him before he regained consciousness. He had prepared a sandbag for the purpose. But when he had mentioned his plan to Colonel Murphy, Second Army Chief of Intelligence, the colonel had refused to give his approval. Yet Austin had his hand on the sandbag as he strolled outside No. 33 to await the new arrival.

At 9.45 p.m. the car carrying the prisoner arrived at H.Q. First to emerge from it was Colonel Murphy. Austin did not know who the prisoner was. A question in his eye, he looked at Colonel Murphy, who shook his head and Austin had little time to think before he saw a quaint figure emerging from the car. Dressed in a khaki shirt and a pair of underpants, an Army blanket wrapped around him, short-sighted eyes blinking in bewilderment, the man stumbled towards the sergeant-major, who gripped his arm to lead him through the door into the house.

"He had no moustache," Austin told me, "but I recognized him at once." Quickly he bundled the prisoner into a prepared room. "We have searched him before," said Captain C. J. L. Wells, the medical officer, who had arrived with him. "But we'd better examine him once more. . . ."

Pointing to an empty couch, Austin told the prisoner: "That's your bed. *Ausziehen!*" he added in German—get undressed! He was met by a cold stare: "He does not know who I am!" muttered the man from behind his blanket: "Oh, yes I do!" Austin replied. "You're HIMMLER. But still that's your bed. Get undressed!" Slowly Heinrich Himmler started to take off his pants, then the shirt. "Now where's that poison. . . ?" Austin asked himself as the Army doctor and the colonel got down to a thorough examination. Toes, ears, hair, every inch of his naked body was inspected. "Open your mouth," ordered Captain Wells. Obediently Himmler opened up. "Get up and come closer to the light!"

Himmler ran his tongue around his lips. Captain Wells was not satisfied, and prepared to put two fingers into his mouth, but Himmler drew his head away and, clamping down on the doctor's fingers, crushed a phial of poison. He had carried it in his mouth for hours. At once Colonel Murphy and Austin jumped at him. As Himmler fell Austin grabbed him by the throat and Colonel Murphy raised his feet high in an attempt to make him disgorge the poison. "We struggled hard," Austin said; "we tried artificial respiration. It was all in vain. . . !" After a quarter of an hour Heinrich Himmler was dead. Austin threw a blanket over him and left him.

Himmler's death was the subject of an exhaustive investigation, but the British War Office has never revealed the result. Austin is fully aware of the rumours which surround the critical half-hour of

that May evening in Lüneburg. People persist in asking him whether it is not true that he had, perhaps, used his sandbag on Himmler after all, or his fists; whether he had not, perhaps, handled him a little roughly in an understandable upsurge of indignation such as any decent man might feel when coming face to face with a monster who had been responsible for the death of millions.

Austin finds himself in an invidious position when people are prepared to shake the hand of the man whom, they insist in believing, Fate had selected to avenge the lives of the countless victims of the Gestapo and the concentration camps! "I should not mind if it were true!" he said. "But it is a fact that Himmler died by his own hand and I did nothing to hasten his decision!"

Barely a year previously, and only a few miles from where Heinrich Himmler was thus left on the dustheap of history, dusk was falling and a sharp wind was driving icy snowflakes across the heath as the prisoners of Belsen shuffled into the main square of the notorious concentration camp to present themselves to their S.S. guards for the nerve-racking daily procedure of the roll-call. The work-worn, undernourished men shivered in their thin striped shirts.

At 5 p.m. the prisoners' own foreman began to count. Swaggering, uniformed warders, horsewhips in their hands, moved along the lines, hurling insults at the trembling mass of humanity. After three-quarters of an hour it became evident that four men, members of a group who had spent the day working outside the camp, were missing. The S.S. warders began to shout angry orders. Prisoners were made to help in the search. They helped willingly because they knew what these searches involved.

On that occasion, while S.S. parties with bloodhounds scanned the neighbourhood and the alarm went out to police and army units in the district, three hours passed with the prisoners standing to attention waiting; four hours—as the first few collapsed silently, to be whipped to their feet again; six hours—when, with a little cry, one man dropped dead; eight, ten, twelve, fourteen hours—death had taken a toll of eight others and the bodies were left where they fell. The rest still stood to attention—without food, without permission to leave the ranks under any circumstances.

Next morning at 7.15 there was a commotion near the entrance to the camp. Four pitiable figures were being pushed towards the square. The fugitives had been recaptured. From the other side, in a weird ceremonial and with the precision of the barrack square, fellow-inmates driven on by guards carried a big block, throne-like, to the foreground. It was the whipping block, carefully, elaborately designed for the victim's hands and legs to be tightly strapped together over it so that his behind became tautly exposed.

A few minutes later, swung by a sergeant of the S.S., the whip lashed down in full fury. The prisoner receiving the beating was him-

self forced to count the strokes. His breaking voice yelled out: "One, two, three, four. . . ." Blood began to spurt through his thin trousers. Weakening, he cried: "Five, six, seven . . ." a pool of blood formed on the ground. After twenty-five strokes fellow-prisoners removed the straps and carried him off. It was the turn of the next, and the next, and the fourth man.

The heavy boot of an S.S. guard plunged into the blood. As he walked towards the administrative buildings he made a long, red trail. There was blood on his boot and on his hand, and a drop fell on to the piece of paper on which he made out his report. It was there, not much more than a smudge, when the report, with other documents, was dispatched to the *Verwaltungs-und Wirtschafts-Hauptamt* (Main Office for Administration and Economy) of the S.S. organization. Eventually it reached the desk of Upper Group Leader S.S. General Oswald Pohl, in charge of concentration camps.

Before Pohl had time to peruse the insignificant document his secretary added another report. This said that, having received their corporal punishment, the four fugitives had been publicly hanged during the next roll-call on the square of Belsen camp. And this was an event such as Pohl would always report to his chief.

Next day the little smudge of blood on the report in Pohl's hand was carried through the high, wide rooms of the offices of his supreme chief in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse in Berlin. In the ante-room, Oswald Pohl shook hands with a tall, blond S.S. officer, clicking his heels at the same time. With a questioning glance he looked at a big door of carved oak. Having the adjutant's approval he opened the door—we are still following the trail of blood from Belsen—and disappeared behind it.

For a moment he stood to attention, taking in once more the familiar atmosphere. Furnished by the famous Association of German Industrial Artists, the room, to a height of six feet, was panelled with light, unvarnished oak. Coconut mats covered the floor. In one corner was a vast desk with a bronze bust of Hitler on the right and the white porcelain figure of a drummer on the left. As if framed by these two ornaments, Pohl saw the head of the man who held out his hand to take the batch of papers from him. Getting up politely, he directed Pohl to another corner of the room, sank into a deep easy-chair, putting his documents on the small round table in front of him, pushing aside a vase with a bunch of orchids. Then he bade the visitor take a seat.

So began Pohl's daily interview with Heinrich Himmler, Reichsfuehrer S.S., Chief of the German Police, German Minister of the Interior, eventually Chief of the Reserve Army, after Hitler the most powerful man in the Nazi Reich. In his field-grey uniform, with the laurel leaves and wreath insignia of the Reichsfuehrer on the lapel, a belt and black tie, Himmler still looked the officer aspirant,

the ensign which he had been at the end of the First World War. Watery, protruding eyes squinted through the thick lenses of his glasses; his upper lip, with the small, mousy moustache, twitched. As he spoke he made an attempt to straighten his sloping shoulders, to expand his narrow chest, to give himself an air of importance.

Pohl glanced at him apprehensively. Like all S.S. leaders, he regarded himself as an instrument of Himmler's policy, always prepared to carry out his grimmest orders without a twinge of conscience. But in his presence the shadow of their policy heavily descended on them, the weight of Himmler's orders rested heavily on their shoulders. As Heinrich Himmler studied the bloodstained document, Pohl, like so many others of Himmler's subordinates, could not help relating this incident—a regular, almost minor occurrence in their professional lives—with the sum total of Himmler's actions all over Germany, all over Europe. In Himmler they saw the symbol of their deeds. It made them shudder. While Adolf Hitler, all his *aides* agree, hypnotized his entourage into enthusiastic acceptance of his orders, Heinrich Himmler's own hesitating, halting manner, the uncertainties, confusion and doubts which plagued his mind, made even the worst bullies around him—confirmed sadists, reckless, callous, scheming adventurers on his staff—often wonder.

Himmler has once been compared with a length of wire whose electric current was supplied from outside—that current being Hitler. He himself could not supply any current. Almost every member of his staff relieved his own conscience by unloading the official and moral responsibility for his S.S. practices on Heinrich Himmler. His staff served him faithfully, they needed him as a leader because without him as the potential whipping-boy of God, of history and Germany's enemies, they could not have gone through with much of what they did. This was a qualification for his job which it would be foolish to underrate. Although he was in many ways the weakest and most insignificant in his own circle of highest S.S. leaders, his infinite capacity for "taking the responsibility" was his great strength. It made him indispensable to them and the Nazi hierarchy as a whole, in many instances even to the German generals. Once Himmler had made up his mind, he would take on his shoulders—and cover with his signature—the most atrocious policies. It was so convenient to be able to ride roughshod over the most primitive laws of humanity, to abandon the most fundamental decencies, to discard every convention in peace or war—and to have somebody always ready to take the blame, always prepared to argue that the "higher purpose" of his historic mission justified the lowest practices.

Even in death Heinrich Himmler still fulfils a similar function. Although neither God nor Germany's enemies are likely to absolve all Germans at Himmler's expense, the German people

themselves have unconsciously elevated him to a secret pedestal as a saviour of Germany's conscience, as a national scapegoat. Defeat was, perhaps, Hitler's fault; war crimes are laid exclusively at Himmler's door. The German conscience is clear because the blame for everything sinister, contemptible, criminal and horrible that happened in Germany and the occupied countries between 1933 and 1945 rests on Himmler.

And so exclusive, according to this convenient theory, is Himmler's guilt that not even his S.S. Black Guards should be associated with it. Former S.S. men, it is said, are brave and strong and best suitable as recruits for a new Western German army, the greatest soldiers Western Europe and America can hope to conscript as allies. (In the Eastern Zone S.S. men have long been enrolled in the Sovietized Police *Bereitschaften,* Stalin's S.S.) There are former S.S. generals and highest police leaders, not a few convicted murderers and others who, more subtly, did not lend a hand but only their brains, who have long been waiting in the wings of German politics for their cue to return to public life. Some have exploited their inside knowledge about Himmler, about the S.S. and the Gestapo, about concentration and extermination camps, about Nazi methods of internal and foreign espionage, about the whole sordid and sinister business of terror by writing illuminating books about it all. They are now wielding a pen as adroitly as the Gestapo wielded the axe. They spin a tale as expertly as the S.S. knotted the hangman's rope. When in 1951 I sought an interview with S.S. General Karl Wolff, I was told that I had better be duly deferential as he was once more a very important person, had already resumed contact with foreign legations. Others, like Gunther d'Alquen, the ribald ex-editor of *Das Schwarze Korps,* organ of the S.S. Black Guards, boasted that he was "in allied employ." Under the chairmanship of S.S. General Gille, Himmler's former Black Guards have reassembled behind the guise of a typical "Soldiers' Association," and it was earnestly pointed out to me that I should be unwise to condemn the S.S. indiscriminately because a million former S.S. men are the flower of Western Germany and, together with their families and friends, form a solid block of five million people whose views and feelings it might be dangerous to rouse.

Thus the task of examining Himmler's place in history—perhaps by the side of Gengis Khan, Torquemada, Fouché—does not merely mean delving into the dead past. Though Himmler died in Lüneburg in 1945, kindred spirits still stalk the German scene as living apparitions. His brother Gebhard told me that he was still proud to bear the name of Himmler. Others, once close to him, explain that he was much misunderstood, that it was all a terrible mistake. Let us see what that mistake was!

CHAPTER ONE

THE MISSING LINK

As a little boy Heinrich Himmler sat on his father's knee almost every evening, ear glued to the lips from which tales of wonderful adventure flowed in a rhythmic, studied language. Hero of the tales invariably was grandfather Johann Konrad Himmler, soldier of fortune who had hitched his star to any army that would have him, a rugged nineteenth-century warrior who had burst the narrow confines of his time and branched out into the wide world. Grandfather's most glorious campaign had been fought in Greece. He had marched in the shadow of the Acropolis; he had seen Thebes and the Pass of Thermopylae and brought back to his own humble environment a breath of adventure and greatness. What did it matter that he had spent the last years of his life supplementing a meagre pension by work as commissionaire on a rural council not far from Munich. He had had a glimpse of greater vistas, had acquired a smattering of history, a respect for learning and a thirst for knowledge. If there was now no further chance to widen his own horizon, he was anxious to spend what little money he had saved on a sound and solid education for his son.

This son, Gebhard Himmler—Heinrich Himmler's father—remained for ever grateful to the memory of the strange, simple, yet imaginative man of whom he had seen little and whom he had sometimes found it difficult to call father. "I owe everything to him," he used to say. Gebhard was born in Lindau, on the German side of Lake Constance, in 1865. His diligence in school was not only a debt of honour which he paid to his father; it brought its own rewards when he successfully passed his entrance examination for Munich University, where he studied philology. To become a teacher of languages was his ambition after graduation. He made Munich his home and there was married a few years later to Anna Heyder, daughter of a wealthy merchant from Regensburg. Her dowry enabled Gebhard to set himself up in a comfortable flat. He was now anxious to continue his studies and research into the history of Germany which fascinated him. He wanted to add to his collection of old coins and improve his knowledge of numismatics. Now he had enough money to take part in the fashionable hobby of excavating from the soil of Germany the hidden tokens of her

teutonic past and the vessels and weapons which linked her to the ancient civilization of Rome.

There seemed to be many jobs available for a man of his talents and inclinations, and he avidly accepted an offer to become the tutor of a Wittelsbach prince, Heinrich of Bavaria, whom he instructed in the glorious story of his own great family. The world of the Wittelsbachers, with its great traditions and proud associations, stimulated the young professor. He was a good and faithful servant of the Royal House and it was not for several years that he turned to his chosen profession as a high-school teacher in Munich. He lived in the Liebigstrasse, just above the famous Liebig apothecary's from which the street took its name. There, on 7 October, 1900, at the beginning of a century on which he left a million scars, Heinrich Himmler was born as Professor Gebhard Himmler's second son. He was not much more than a toddler when he was first attracted by the mysterious alchemy which was obviously practised in the chemist's shop downstairs, by the concoctions which were brewed there, the powders and pills which people received over the counter.

Little Heinrich grew up in a calm and cultured atmosphere, reflecting the artistic inclinations of his father. He was baptized as a Roman Catholic and Prince Heinrich von Bayern, his father's pupil, was his godfather. In the evening he would say his prayers in front of an ivory statue of Christ, cut from one big elephant's tooth, which is still in the possession of his elder brother. He was taught to be careful of the mirrors and antique chests, of the paintings and other *objets d'art* which crowded the flat. No Sunday passed without Himmler senior taking his wife and three children (a third brother, Ernst, was born in 1906) to church. Regularly Heinrich Himmler would confess his sins and take Holy Communion with the rest of his family.

After dinner Mother would sew in a corner of the room while Father would read to the boys from the historical works which overflowed from his ever-growing library. Heinrich was not yet ten when he could reel off the dates of famous battles; the sagas of the Nibelungs were his bedtime stories, the wars of the Middle Ages fuel for his imagination which other boys of his generation fired with tales of Red Indian exploits across the Atlantic. By the time he was entered into German high-school he could match his teachers' knowledge of Germany's great but turbulent past. Those who knew young Heinrich at the time describe him as a good pupil, a diligent, bookish boy whose father had seen to it that he knew why he was learning. He had his limitations. However hard he tried to learn a foreign language, he never achieved a workable knowledge of any one. For many months the boy tortured himself with attempts to learn the piano, but his father

soon realized that the awkward fingers would not follow the command of his over-eager mind. Most boys are relieved when their parents agree to liberate them from the attention of their music teachers. To Heinrich Himmler it was a sad day when he was told that his hopeless endeavours must come to an end. For years afterwards he would sit silently and listen to his elder brother—named Gebhard, like his father—extracting heavenly tunes from the selfsame piano which had defied him. On Sundays he accompanied his brother to church, where, to his envy, he was playing the organ for the congregation.

One of the rooms in the parental flat had gradually been set aside and turned into a shrine devoted to the memory of the family's ancestors. It soon came to include souvenirs and gifts from relatives and the more important friends. Heinrich spent many hours of his leisure in this room, which he later, not quite accurately, called the *Ahnenzimmer* (ancestors' room). An inexplicable curiosity to know all about his ancestors, much more than his father could tell him, possessed Heinrich Himmler already at an early age.

Here, then, originated in young Heinrich Himmler's consciousness the preoccupation with problems of ancestry which the stories about his grandfather first stimulated until they became an obsession. It was the first symptom of a morbid inclination to look into the past and draw from it a picture of the future, to base his philosophy on ideas which progress, greater knowledge, modern civilization had long and justly disproved and, seemingly, confined to oblivion. From them grew eventually Himmler's conception of the S.S. organization and finally an S.S. state within the German state. Race and ancestry were to be the foundations of this state. "We ask," Himmler said much later (of the prospective S.S. men), "the record of his ancestry as far back as 1750. . . ." We shall soon see the fantastic result which this policy produced. But while Heinrich Himmler was laying down the stern principles of admission to the S.S., of which he was the supreme commander, he was not at all sure whether he himself could fulfil the genetic demands made on his officers and men.

Even before the Nazis came to power in 1933 there were already in existence elaborate family trees which traced the descent of almost every Nazi leader back to earlier generations. Hitler's, it is true, was kept behind lock and key because it might have revealed his father's illegitimate birth and the fact that the family name of Schickelgruber was only changed to Hitler to conform with the provisions of a relative's will. Hermann Goering proudly boasted that the blood of the ancient Royal Houses of Hohenzollern and Wittelsbach flowed in his veins, that he was, however distantly, related to the family of Germany's great poet

and thinker, Goethe, to Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, and—through the Hohenzollerns—to Queen Victoria. But Heinrich Himmler's tree defied investigation at the roots. The incensed and frustrated Reichsfuehrer of the S.S. finally assigned a scientist with a high rank in the S.S. to devote his time exclusively to research into the antecedents of the Himmler clan. The man, Major Bergmann, took up his work in 1934. The war had gone on for several years and the cream of Himmler's pure-blooded teutonic knights was already biting the dust in a dozen European countries when Bergmann, far removed from the tremendous events of the day, now assisted by a large clerical staff, still continued to dig into the soil from which Himmler was supposed to have sprung.

Early in 1951 I travelled to Gmünd, the little Bavarian village by the Tegernsee around which Nazi villas began to spring up in the early 'twenties and which is still a favourite hideout of inconspicuous but prosperous survivors of the régime. Occupying a small, crammed ground-floor flat in one of these villas, I found Gebhard Himmler, who does not conform to the general formula. The late Heinrich's brother is notorious but impecunious, writhing under the full blast of anti-Himmler sentiment which has been cultivated so carefully in post-war Germany. Once a Standartenfuehrer, a full colonel in the S.S., employed on his brother's headquarter's staff as a technical adviser on education, Gebhard Himmler, with wife and child, lives the life of a political pariah, although he pathetically asserts that he is "still proud to bear the name of Himmler." He was willing, indeed anxious, to speak about his late brother, and much of the information about Heinrich Himmler's private life which has found its way into these pages originates from Gebhard, although it has, of course, been stripped of the indulgence of a brotherly interpretation of hard and incontrovertible facts.

Here, in two crowded rooms, there was much to recreate the atmosphere of Heinrich Himmler's early days: the piano on which he played as a boy, the ivory statue of Christ on the Cross before which he used to say his prayers. From among a mass of documents Gebhard Himmler produced the Himmler clan's *Sippenbuch* (a family stud-book, obligatory documents for every good Aryan in Nazi Germany). That pass-book shows that Heinrich Himmler's grandfather, Johann Konrad, was the illegitimate son of Johann Michael Hettinger and Johanna Dorothea Himmler. Old Hettinger is believed to have been born at Ansbach on 4 December, 1781. But however hard Major Bergmann tried to find earlier clues, however urgent messages he sent to local parishes, to harassed registrars, to confused churchwardens on the authority of the almighty Reichsfuehrer himself, no suitable

Hettinger senior could be found to fill the bill as Heinrich Himmler's great-great-grandfather.

To Himmler it was a point of honour to discover this elusive ancestor. To Bergmann it was a matter of life and death. In his despair, instead of an older Hettinger, he produced one Friedrich Hoettinger and let it go at that. Hoettinger figures in Gebhard Himmler's family pass-book as the last of the line: "There is no further information available," he recalled sadly. But the problem becomes even more hopeless when it comes to Grandmother Agathe Kiene (mother of Himmler senior). A number of menacing question-marks loom on the branches of her family tree where there should be dates and places of birth of her own grandparents. Big blanks are shown on the table which would have failed to secure admission to the S.S. for Heinrich Himmler had he tried to join the ranks instead of making the ranks join him.

The Aryan descent of Heinrich Himmler's mother is equally left in doubt. I talked to many people who knew the fine old lady, a woman with a sunny temperament over which only a few intimates seemed to discover the shadow cast by a realization that her son Heinrich was a freak. Frau Himmler senior was never sparing in her criticism of Heinrich, even when he had already become a power in the land. He had inherited the blurred and indistinct features of her face; but while her eyes rested kindly and calmly on the world around her, Himmler's cold and diffident stare into space disguised the resemblance. Former high-ranking S.S. functionaries, experts in race research and physiognomics which they regarded as an exact science, are still debating the bone structure of Himmler's head and face. Some of them who used to discuss the problem with Bergmann in careful whispers have reason to believe that Himmler's private race researcher had discovered a pointer to Frau Himmler's descent from Mongolian stock. Gebhard Himmler admitted that he had often heard his parents mention the possibility that Grandma Anna Heyder's ancestors came from Hungary. The name of that family, they said, was originally Red Hey, a transposition of the syllables which form the name of Heyder. But that, as far as Bergmann's research elicited, was long before the S.S. key year of 1750. Ancestor number thirty-one, a certain Herr Fortunat Reindl, is known to have married in 1772. What and who went before him is lost in the mist of a family history of which every S.S. aspirant would have had reasons to be ashamed.

Himmler was as yet not aware of these details when the family moved from Munich to Landshut, where father became head of a high-school, which the boys joined as pupils. Today the surviving members of Himmler's family strongly deny that the youngsters were ever in trouble with their little colleagues because they

would tell Father too much of what went on behind their teacher's back. But one of Himmler's schoolmates still describes the boy Heinrich as a notorious informer. Groups of boys, exchanging their small secrets, would disperse, he said, when the awkward, short-sighted, ugly little fellow approached. None of his schoolmates would ever accept an invitation to the Himmler home, and Heinrich kept aloof, often even from his brother. Yes, those who knew him then will say today he was "different," not a good mixer, not good at anything except history, hampered at games or sport by the weakness of his eyes and the unfortunate build of his body.

The family lived in Landshut until 1919. The memory of his grandfather, the tales of the soldierly virtues which had brought him respect, if not fame, in his own circle of friends, aroused in young Heinrich a desire to emulate the old man, to become a soldier and an officer. In the third year of the war he joined the German Army as an ensign in the 11th Regiment, which was stationed at Regensburg. The end of the war and the defeat of Germany deprived him of all hopes of realizing his great ambition. A sullen, dissatisfied, disappointed, morose and certainly unhappy young man of eighteen entered the Technical Highschool for Agriculture in Munich to study for a farmer's diploma. Chemistry, the study of fertilizers, raising new types of crop, weeding and breeding novel varieties, were his chief concern. The first symptoms of the mania which later gripped him began to manifest themselves. To mould plants and animals in new patterns to his own design became a hobby; to raise pure and beautiful flowers and trees, the purpose of his study; to prepare the ground for such achievements, to treat and till the soil, the precondition for success. The more he turned the problem over in his mind, the more it came back to the fertilizers. Fate had singled out the youngster in whose imagination new trees were growing into high heaven to start his professional career by working with manure. Armed with a farmer's diploma, he went out hunting for a job and regarded himself as lucky when he was engaged as a laboratory assistant by the Stickstoff GmbH (Nitrogen, Ltd.) of Schleissheim, a firm conducting field tests with calcium-nitrogen fertilizers.

The year was 1922 and Heinrich Himmler's spare time was spent like that of most young men in Germany in the post-war years—with discussion about the loss of the war and the future of their country. Inevitably he joined his elder brother as a member of one of the innumerable para-military nationalistic organizations of the day, the *Reichskriegsflagge*, in which an as yet unknown ambitious and politically active army officer, Captain Ernst Roehm, took a special interest. The *Reichskriegs-*

flagge, with all other national organizations, was called out on 8 and 9 November, 1923, when one Adolf Hitler incited the Bavarian nationalists to rise against the "November Republic," the democratic government of Berlin. Gebhard and Heinrich Himmler were among those who answered the call.

There is still in existence a picture which shows a group of rather ridiculous-looking youngsters standing guard behind a barbed-wire enclosure which the putschists had thrown around the building of the War Ministry in Munich. The boys were obviously trying to look fierce and martial. Among them is Gebhard Himmler, and in the centre of the picture one can discern the figure and face, already embellished by the hint of a moustache, of ex-ensign Heinrich Himmler. The putsch largely passed the Himmlers by. It collapsed before they could draw their revolvers, before Heinrich Himmler could wave the flag to which he seemed to cling desperately for support in a situation wrought with imaginary danger. Captain Roehm never noticed his humble follower. Adolf Hitler at the time did not know that the Himmlers supported him. When the leaders of the abortive putsch dispersed in flight or went to jail, nobody even noticed Heinrich Himmler, who just went home. And Heinrich Himmler, his first excursion into the violent street politics of the early 'twenties having come to an inglorious end, did hardly realize that the ban on the Nazi Party which followed the putsch, the dissolution of the S.A., the Party's storm-troops, also removed from the political scene of Bavaria the *Stosstrupp Hitler*, a platoon of S.A. commandos who had acted as Hitler's personal bodyguard and was the nucleus from which the all-powerful S.S. Black Guards' organization was eventually developed.

CHAPTER TWO

S.S.—SPACE SELLERS

THE agricultural tests conducted with the help of young Himmler did not produce any grandiose results. Economic conditions in Germany deteriorated and the nitrogen firm in Schleissheim was forced to reduce its staff. One of the first to get his notice was Heinrich Himmler. He did not seem to care. The world of his imagination was none too secure either. There seemed no hope of recapturing the glories of Germany's past. The Reichswehr, Germany's tightly organized, super-efficient post-war army of one hundred thousand élite soldiers and officers, would not even look at the former ensign whose physical appearance and mental qualifications were far below the standard set by ambitious generals. In one of his rare confidential moods he later confessed to his friend, Joseph (Sepp) Dietrich, that he haunted recruiting offices and could never forget the piteously contemptuous looks from burly sergeants, that their: "Sorry, *untauglich*!" (unfit!) resounded in his ears when he tried to find sleep after another day of disappointment. For over a year Heinrich Himmler, now twenty-four years old, did exactly nothing. His parents tried to rouse their brooding son from his daydreams. But while his ageing father pursued his profession and his two brothers worked hard in their jobs, he only contemplated the world, past and present. The family had moved to the little town of Ingolstadt, but Heinrich Himmler's heart—and his few friends—were in Landshut.

In Landshut in 1925 he heard that Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party was being re-established even though the S.A. formations were still banned. Hitler and other Nazi leaders were debarred from holding public meetings or making speeches anywhere, except in Saxonia and Thuringia, where the movement was weak and overshadowed by the traditional parties of Left, Right and Centre—particularly those of the Left. To protect Nazi speakers who ventured on to platforms in these hostile parts, and to circumvent the ban on the S.A., Hitler organized a new formation and called it the *Schutz Staffeln* (Protective Guards). They had to provide their own uniforms and they chose black breeches, jackets and black shirts so as to distinguish themselves from the banned Brown Shirts of the S.A. There was only a handful of them and, though later S.S. officers missed

few opportunities to recall the spirit of sacrifice which animated this small band, Hitler quickly thought of a way to exploit their enthusiasm for his cause and to cement their loyalty with the bait of a small income. The Nazi Fuehrer had a financial interest in the party newspaper, *Der Voelkischer Beobachter*, and though, in retrospect and full knowledge of the grim history of the S.S., it is not easy to credit, it is a fact that the advance guards of the dreaded terror units were employed by Hitler as space sellers for his newspaper. The first draft of the S.S. constitution included a paragraph which defined the duty of every S.S. man to advance and to further the fortunes of the paper.

Heinrich Himmler, in the meantime, presented himself at the small single room in a block near St. Martin's Church in Landshut where the Nazi party had established one of its new branch offices. Hardly looking up from his desk, Gregor Strasser, the local Nazi Party Chief, casually greeted the young man who stutteringly and hesitatingly presented himself as an enthusiastic supporter of the cause. The conversation was sluggish—Strasser, among his Party comrades, has later often in mock-consternation reproached himself for having carried it on at all. Casually, accidentally, however, he discovered that he and young Himmler had something in common. Before he began to devote himself exclusively to the Party Gregor Strasser had been a chemist, and Heinrich Himmler's interest in chemistry was still alive and had been stimulated by his short-lived work in Schleissheim. This common interest in chemistry brought the two men together. A friendship developed. Strasser was a stern, hard man, a Mussolini-like fanatic whose political ambition was to fuse latent German Nationalism with sound, honest Socialism and whose slogan was: "Everything for the common (German) people!" A few weeks later he engaged Heinrich Himmler as his secretary. Himmler's job was to establish contact with former members of the Nazi Party, to canvass new members. As the activities of the Party gathered momentum again, Gregor Strasser also assumed control over propaganda and publicity and began to work in close co-operation with the administration of *Der Voelkischer Beobachter*.

From him the space sellers, who were also the Fuehrer's S.S. guards, received their instructions—often through the medium of Heinrich Himmler, who was paid a salary of one hundred and twenty marks (out of which he contributed a share to the meagre Party funds). But it was not only important for the Party paper to obtain advertising revenue. The S.S. (space sellers) were also employed as reporters, were ordered to find out whatever they could about the moves of the local Communists and Socialists and instructed to keep a close watch on the Nazi Party's other numerous enemies. Subtly, every one of them was moulded into a combination of tough boy and party spy. Heinrich Himmler collected and

collated the information which they brought back and kept a check on people whom they visited and on the funds which they were able to collect for *Der Voelkischer Beobachter* and the Party exchequer. Such assiduous work soon earned him the appointment of Assistant Propaganda Chief of the National Socialist Workers' Party.

The young Party official occupied a small desk in a room crammed with newspaper files and shelves stacked high with Party records and correspondence. A framed picture of Adolf Hitler adorned the wall facing Heinrich Himmler: "I looked up to you, *mein Fuehrer*, looked up to you literally!" Himmler ingratiatingly used to say in an attempt to make a deferential joke after his fashion. Hans Erhard, one of the people who knew Himmler at the time, told me he had secretly observed Himmler not only looking up at Hitler, but addressing the picture as a sort of rehearsal for the first time he would meet the Fuehrer.

When that day came, not much later, Himmler had no opportunity to speak to Hitler. The Fuehrer looked through him, never even asked his name. It is characteristic of Himmler's nebulous insignificance at the time that I have failed to discover any definite date or occasion on which these two men established personal contact. Himmler was around—that was all. Imperceptibly he grew into the group of Nazi leaders who at first disregarded him, later accepted him as someone to whose presence they had become accustomed. His most predominant trait at the time was a dog-like subservience to his superiors, a determined reluctance to express any views of his own, an untiring diligence in keeping records and notes and gathering information of every sort. Himmler has later often been described as a walking card-index. Indeed, while young Nazi rowdies roamed the streets to fight all-comers, his early days in the belligerent and violent Nazi Party saw him presiding over a bundle of files. As Gregor Strasser's glorified office-boy, Himmler was frequently sent out on errands to other Party members and came to know most of them well. Often he was the only link between isolated followers of Hitler and the centre of the Party. From him they obtained information about Party developments; and he, in turn, questioned them on conditions in their locality. Of what he was told he made careful notes. Gregor Strasser, in the meantime, who opposed many of Hitler's political moves and remained his permanent rival for leadership of the Party, occupied himself more and more with larger issues and left more and more of the administrative work to Heinrich Himmler.

Hitler was straining every nerve to obtain a removal of the ban on the large battalions of the S.A. But for the time being the ban remained in force and he was obliged to rely on the two hundred odd militant men of the S.S. On the occasion of the second all-Party gathering, the Party Day in Weimar in 1926, he handed to the small

formation for safe keeping the most valuable relic of the Party, the so-called blood flag behind which he had marched in Munich during the abortive putsch of November, 1923. When, shortly afterwards, the ban on the S.A. was removed, the S.S. sank almost into oblivion. Hitler, who correctly assessed Himmler's vanity and craving for office and title, however meaningless and empty, gratified the Party clerk with the appointment of Deputy Leader of the S.S. A man named Berchtold, Chief of the S.A., was the real boss. But Heinrich Himmler's salary was doubled.

In the winter of 1951 I travelled to the Westphalian town of Bielefeld, where Frau Marga Himmler and her daughter have settled after the war. I had previously met several widows of the late Nazi war-criminals and, as in the case of Frau Emmy Goering, was struck by their dignity and the stubborn faith with which they clung to the memory of their men. From the outset I knew that Frau Himmler might display a similar attitude, but that in her case it would hardly correspond to her real feelings. As far as Heinrich Himmler, the Gestapo Chief and mass-murderer, is concerned, Frau Himmler, ageing, hard faced, tight lipped, fearfully aggressive, borne down by the hatred of old friends and new enemies, is not a useful witness at all. It is known that the woman who was able to survive the post-war period only by performing hard, menial work had not been on the best of terms with her husband. Relations between Heinrich Himmler and his wife were tenuous, their rare encounters marked by acrimonious exchanges. For almost a decade before his death they had very little to do with each other. But when in 1927 he travelled to Berlin on Party business, and there, alone one evening in the strange city, met a young woman named Fräulein Margarete Concerzowo, he thought she was the most wonderful girl in the world. She told him she hailed from Bromberg, in the Polish province of Pomorze, which Germans regard and describe as Western Prussia. Margarete, known to her family and friends as Marga, seven years older than the young man whose imagination she had fired to her own surprise, was a woman as aloof as Himmler was cold and timid. Two basically lonely hearts joined forces. Himmler courted her—if he was capable of implementing the meaning of the word. She responded—though love would be too strong an emotion to apply to her feelings for Heinrich Himmler. They married later in the year, but never really became friends. When, in August, 1928, a girl, Gudrun, was born to Marga Himmler, she concentrated on her mission as a mother. Heinrich Himmler continued to travel around the country and saw little of his family.

But the money which his wife had brought into the marriage enabled him to satisfy an old craving. With it he bought a smallholding at Munich-Trudering, where he built a chicken coop and, during odd week-ends, experimented with several breeds to improve

their quality and their output of eggs. He went to great length to obtain seeds of rare plants and medicinal herbs which folk-lore invested with the reputation of magic healing powers. Most of their names he discovered in an old German book on natural medicaments—a book which remained in a place of honour in his library until the end. In his garden he set aside space to plant and develop them. He envisaged a world in which there would be no chemists—like the one whom he watched as a boy brewing his tonics—because Nature, in his opinion, was quite capable of providing a cure for all ills. To release the world from the bondage which tied it to modern chemistry seemed to him a task well worth undertaking; independence of mankind from chemistry and all artificial medicaments an aim highly desirable. "Back to Nature . . . !" was his favourite slogan. He was already German Minister of the Interior when he told his brother how much he despised the average doctor who would prescribe pills and medicines which he could not procure without the help of chemists. "What would our doctors do," he asked, "if there were no chemists on whom to rely?"

It became obvious that during many months of idleness he had thought deeply—if not all too clearly—about problems of this character and had linked them with his research into German history. And it was no accident that, among the many fellow Nazis whom he met in these days, he attached himself most closely to two men whose thoughts appeared to have followed similar lines. His own conclusions were as yet undefined and he looked up in admiration to two personal friends of Adolf Hitler—R. Walther Darre and Alfred Rosenberg. Both men, it so happened, were working on theories which seemed to Heinrich Himmler the concrete substance of his own ideas. If we examine their speeches and writings, outcome of the thoughts with which they toyed at the time, and the gist of the conversations which they conducted in the presence of a spellbound Himmler, it is astonishing that they should have helped him to clarify his own mind. They are difficult to digest, often incapable of explanation even in the original German. In translation they often become completely unintelligible. They are confused, arbitrary and purposely mysterious, and hide their inconsistencies behind a verbiage which defies interpretation.

Germany, of course, was the central topic of all these conversations, and Alfred Rosenberg, a Balt with a deep hatred of all things Slav, would delve deep into the history of German philosophy, into the origin of the Germanic people, into the development of the Nordic race, its wanderings and survival, as he saw it, when weaker races perished. He talked about the battles of blood and environment, of the clash between blood and blood—assuming that every race had a different type of blood. Race, he declared, was the image of the soul—whatever that may mean. And race, he lectured to his

awed listeners, was the greatest asset of mankind. The Nordic race was alway blond—and Rosenberg had carried out extensive research to discover traces of "blond" peoples, going back thousands of years before Christ. In 1927, during excavations near the Cheops Pyramid in Egypt, the picture of Princess and Queen Medinet-Gurob had been discovered. She had lived from 2633 to 2564 B.C., and the picture, unmistakably, had shown her with blond hair. To Rosenberg it was at once proof of the divine origin of the blond race and evidence of its power of survival.

The tradition of the blond races in Africa, the old Irish ideals of beauty—white skin and blond hair—figured regularly in his conversations. "The most beautiful dream of Nordic humanity," he declaimed, "was dreamed in Hellas." Beauty, blondness, aristocracy —these, to Rosenberg, were the ingredients of the true Germanic race. Were there not, he asked, ancient aristocratic constitutions which forbade the mixing of blood? As far as he was concerned, only an aristocratic soul really counted. And the Nordic race, the old Teutons, the modern Germans who sprang from them—they alone have managed to retain this unique quality of the soul. Compared with the value of an aristocratic soul, such ideas as love, humility, kindness and mercy sank into insignificance where they belonged.

Such notions as love and humanity belonged to "contemptible individuals like Jesus Christ and His Apostles," while, on the other hand, Rosenberg discovered among some of their sayings examples of "typical Jewish arrogance and intolerance." "Only the myth of blood counts," he declared, and Himmler nodded approval. "Remember the call of blood," he added, bringing the conversation up to date and referring to the World War, "which alone made millions and millions willing to sacrifice their lives for the Honour and Liberty of their People." Alfred Rosenberg, not much later, reproduced these thoughts in a book[1] which went on every Nazi bookshelf by the side of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. To genuine philosophers and scientists his book was partly incomprehensible, partly plain nonsense. It impressed the semi-educated Hitler with the evidence of great learning and painstaking research which he believed to discover in many passages. But Himmler accepted Alfred Rosenberg's "Philosophy" hook, line and sinker, long before it was sufficiently formulated even to be put on paper.

Heinrich Himmler was never a deep thinker; it was never easy for him to absorb and digest information intelligently. But his memory was good and he thought of himself as a practical man. What Rosenberg said and thought would have to be turned into practice. It needed someone like him, well versed in history, to implement the theories of this great philosopher and able talker,

[1] *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhundert*, by Alfred Rosenberg (Hoheneichen-Verlag, Munich).

who, however, lived in the clouds. Readily, subserviently, Himmler appointed himself Rosenberg's chief disciple. That the Fuehrer always displayed respect for Rosenberg was one more reason to join his school of thought. But Heinrich Himmler would still not have been able to devise a practical method of implementing these ideas, to take active steps to apply what principles he could discover in them to current contingencies had not Walther Darre given them an up-to-date twist. Darre, a good-looking, energetic young agriculturist, had both feet firmly on the ground. Where Rosenberg was in the clouds of philosophic conjecture, Darre produced apparently workable formulae and a detailed scheme of procedure. Himmler, who admired Rosenberg because he could think more deeply than he could, was no less impressed by Darre because he would act more decisively than he dared.

It was Walther Darre who urged Himmler to transfer his attention from the breeding of herbs and the raising of chickens to human beings. Himmler, Darre whispered, had under his leadership a splendid body of men who came very near the aristocratic ideals with which Rosenberg was imbued. They were fine, strong specimens, these two-hundred-odd S.S. men, he said, of whom Himmler was deputy commander; just the type from whom to develop that incorruptible, powerful strain of race, to strengthen and expand the Nordic qualities of the German people. Leadership, Darre explained, meant more than just organizing a bunch of men and sending them out on their day-to-day assignments to political meetings or on begging expeditions. Himmler's duty was to provide moral leadership also, to teach these men and prepare them for their historic task as banner-bearers of the Nordic race.

"Get rid of every single one who does not conform to our standards," Darre suggested. "Retain only men who spring from the soil, strong, healthy peasants, farmers' boys. Every one of them must be blond and his features must give visible proof of his true Nordic origin!" Darre based many of his arguments on a period of German history with which Himmler was more familiar than with Rosenberg's references to ancient African culture. Darre was talking of the Saxon kings—of Heinrich I in particular, who had lived in the tenth century. "Heinrich has taught us many lessons," he said, "which modern Germany should have learnt long ago!" These words planted a seed in Himmler's mind which was to bear strange fruits. "You are Heinrich, too!" Darre said, and thought it was a good joke. It was no joke to Heinrich Himmler. On the day of this conversation he decided to concentrate even more closely than he had done before on a study of the times and history of Heinrich I, his medieval namesake.

He also decided to acquaint the Fuehrer with the tremendous, historical possibilities which Walther Darre had opened up for his

S.S. Black Guards. "If I had power to rule this exquisite handful of men in his spirit," he told Hitler, "I could help in perpetuating the Nordic race for ever. They could become a bulwark against the wave of Jewish influences which threatens to drown our beloved people. They could be symbols of the greatness of the German race of which we are the guardians." When the conversation was quoted to me I could hardly believe that Himmler spoke in this stilted, sermonizing manner, but all who met him confirmed that he would frequently switch from the more comfortable, pedestrian Bavarian idiom (which, incidentally, often concealed his true nature from his listeners) to the Rosenberg technique of woolly demagogy.

Hitler actually seemed to hear Rosenberg speaking, and that was good enough for him. His thoughts were in Berlin, where, in a political battle of tangible and immediate portent, the Nazi Party was struggling for stronger representation in the Reichstag. But just because he was absorbed by these practical considerations, it suited him well to have somebody so fervently applying his mind to the spiritual aspects of his policy—to give content to his own, Rosenberg's and Darre's ideas. On 6 January, 1929, he issued an order which appointed Heinrich Himmler Reichsfuehrer (Reich leader) of the S.S. Black Guards.

At the time it was not a great event in the young history of the Party. Hitler himself hardly realized the course of events which his high-sounding but empty appointment had set in motion. Some members of Hitler's entourage did not take it very seriously They thought of Himmler as a crackpot, who was investing Rosenberg's ideas with greater importance than they deserved and were convinced that his S.S. would soon be submerged again by the brown flood of the S.A. Only a few seemed to discover an ulterior motive behind the privileges which Hitler granted to Himmler. A third group finally were anxious to jump on his bandwaggon. Heinrich Himmler himself joyfully went into conference with Walther Darre and implored him to help in carrying out the grandiose scheme which he had outlined to his Fuehrer.

Walther Darre had actually developed his theories for application to agriculture. As the young Party's agricultural expert, he hoped one day to become Germany's Minister of Agriculture—a hope which was eventually fulfilled. But the human element was the corner-stone of his ideas and he welcomed Himmler's enthusiastic support. With Himmler's help his plans, taking an ever more concrete shape in his mind, could soon be translated into practice. Darre's notion was that the countryside should be the source of all strength for the Nordic race. Germanic types had never gladly taken to life in cities, and even Heinrich I, Himmler's hero, had to force his Saxons to move into the burghs and fortified cities which he was the first to build on the Continent—burghs similar to those developed

in Britain around the same period. "Jews, very typically," Darre said, "gravitate towards the cities. Aristocrats always spring from the land!" As in England today (1930), he thought, only landowners were real aristocrats. And with Germanic races in particular blood and soil was an organic unity. "Get men who spring from the soil and you will create a new aristocracy!" he exhorted. Himmler already saw himself as the guardian of Germany's Nordic heritage. Darre's enthusiasm for the true Nordic–Germanic blood-and-soil aristocracy went hand in hand with a profound contempt and hatred of other races. "Germanic aristocracy and Germanic peasantry is always identical," he said. "That distinguishes us from the Slavs and Celts and the Jews, thank God!" The Jews, to him, were the poison which threatened the organic development of the Nordic race, the danger of contamination with Jewish blood the greatest menace facing his conception of the Nordic superman. His practical proposal to Himmler was this: "Our task is to revive the old Germanic idea of aristocracy, to breed a race fit for great achievement. Our aristocracy must be anchored in its own being and must not be created by appointment."

The "aristocrats" of the S.S. Black Guards were roaming the streets of German cities, provoking fights to prove their physical prowess, setting about Jewish youngsters, mocking Jewish girls—bands of swaggering yokels, recruited in the countryside and convinced, because their leaders told them, that they were the cream of German humanity. In official S.S. language, as incorporated in the standard work describing National Socialist institutions,[1] these ideas were laid down in this way: ". . . . a homogeneous, firmly welded fighting force has been created, bound by ideological oath, whose fighters are selected from the best Aryan humanity. The conception of blood and soil serves as directive for the selection. . . . Every S.S. man . . . will be ideologically and physically trained so that he can be employed individually or in groups. . . . Only the best and thoroughbred Germans are suited. . . . Obedience is unconditionally demanded. . . . The S.S. man is prepared to carry out blindly every order . . . from the Fuehrer or . . . his superiors, even if it demands the greatest sacrifice of himself."

Thus were established the three main principles to guide the S.S.: Race, Obedience, Sacrifice. But Himmler was not quite sure how to maintain such a standard of "blood and soil," and it was again Walther Darre who came to the rescue by devising a theory for the correct breeding of the race, so that it could be perpetuated. His preliminary formula hinged on the problem of marriage, which he compared with a railway junction where the signal points to the way along which the true Nordic man invests his racial inheritance, his blood—either for the good or for the bad. The choice of his wife

[1] *Das Organisationsbuch der N.S.D.A.P.-Zentralverlag der N.S.D.A.P.*

determines the future of the race. Therefore, he laid down, in order that there should only be suitable descendants (i.e., those conforming with his racial standards of blood and soil) the State must: (1) test its young growing men as regards character and physique; must (2) classify the girls into two categories—those who shall be permitted to marry and have children, and those unworthy of such permission; and (3) educate the young men to enable them to make the right choice of a mating partner.

There was as yet little hope that the State would accept these principles. But as the small corps of S.S. men had already sworn loyalty and obedience to their Reichsfuehrer, Himmler at once set to work to prepare an S.S. law to that effect. When eventually (in 1931) the so-called S.S. "Marriage Order" was published as S.S. Order No. 65, it faithfully incorporated Darre's principles and became the first commandment of the new S.S. religion.

"The S.S.," it said, "is an association of German men of Nordic determination whose selection is based on special considerations.

"In accordance with the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, and in recognition of the fact that the future of our people depends on the selection and maintenance of racially and hereditarily healthy good blood, I herewith decree that every single member of the S.S. who wishes to marry must obtain a 'Marriage Approval.'

"The aim is to guarantee the hereditarily healthy valuable clan of German stock of Nordic determination.

"'Marriage Approval' will be granted or refused solely according to principles of race and hereditary health.

"Every S.S. man who intends to marry has to obtain the 'Marriage Approval' of the Reichsfuehrer S.S."

The order added that those S.S. men who insisted on marrying in face of the Reichsfuehrer's refusal to approve the marriage would be expelled; that a "Race Office" of the S.S. would deal with the applications for permission to marry; that the "Race Office" would keep *Sippe* (clan) records and enter permission to marry in a corresponding document, a "Clan Book," a family pass-book which every S.S. man had to keep. As the first hints of this forthcoming piece of S.S. legislation had caused apprehension among many men lest clerks at the "Race Office" might gossip about the investigation and examination to which every S.S. bride was to be subjected, a paragraph was added to Order 65 saying: "The Reichsfuehrer and the Chief of the Race Office are bound by word of honour to maintain complete secrecy." And when, even among members of the Nazi Party, there was astonishment and not a little hilarity about the potential repercussions of the order, a final, significant paragraph emphasized: "The S.S. is aware of having made a decision of great importance. Ridicule, scorn and misunderstanding do not touch us. The Future is ours! *Signed*: Reichsfuehrer S.S. H. Himmler."

Darre was delighted with this formal recognition of his early plans. He was duly appointed Chief of the "Race Office" of the S.S. Rosenberg regarded it as the logical foundation on which to build the German Reich's great destiny. Heinrich Himmler was proud because his signature appeared under a document which he regarded as the charter of the recreated modern Nordic race. In a public speech Darre explained the new measure: "The mixing of races," he said," is not just like coffee with milk. It is like a ribbon woven in an infinite carpet where the weaver has the power to change the pattern by choosing or rejecting certain threads and colours. . . ." Himmler went on to choose the threads and colours, to mould the S.S. after his own fashion. He moulded monsters.

Apart from the three race apostles of the Party, the trinity of Rosenberg, Darre and Himmler, blessed with Hitler's approval, few, even among the most ardent and fanatical S.S. men, welcomed the new order. "It remains the great and decisive achievement of the Reichsfuehrer," Guenther d'Alquen, later the Editor of the *S.S. Weekly,* said in a brochure about the Black Guards, "that—at a time when the racial question was still regarded by the movement as a purely negative notion of anti-semitism—he included the theoretical ideas of Nazi *Weltanschauung* in his own organization of the S.S. and helped them to prevail." It did not take the average S.S. man long to realize what it implied. By 1931 the S.S. had expanded after a powerful, if arduous, recruiting campaign and grown to include many thousands of carefully selected men. In the higher ranks now served the first of the traditional German aristocrats who had decided to link their fortunes with the rising Nazi star. Many former German Army officers who regarded the S.A. as a vulgar mob accepted invitations from Hitler and Himmler to apply for membership of the S.S. Some of them later explained that they were attracted by the chance to join a new German Guards' Regiment—the old, pre-war Guards having been abolished. When they decided to take a wife they soon realized what kind of commitment they had made.

One S.S. officer after the war graphically described his and his prospective bride's agonies when they submitted their application for a "Marriage Approval." The order had just come into force and the medical branch of the Race Office had only just begun to function. As the young lady was a member of an aristocratic family, it was comparatively easy for her to prove, as was necessary, that her ancestors, as far back as 1750, had been of Aryan descent, that no Jewish or Slav blood was flowing in her veins. She had been to see her family doctor, who certified that she was physically and mentally healthy. To conform with a request of the Race Office, the doctor also visited the young lady's parents and, though it caused a little embarrassment, fulfilled the letter of the S.S. law by a

perfunctory medical examination which reassured him and enabled him to declare in writing that they were not suffering from any hereditary disease. No, there had been no grave illnesses in the family, they replied to his question. In this instance the formalities were completed quickly, but there were many cases of less illustrious families whose antecedents it was not so easy to establish to the satisfaction of the S.S. organization. However, after only a few weeks even this prominent couple, when armed with certificates, testimonials and family trees they presented themselves at the Race Office, received a severe jolt: "You may go home," the bridegroom was told. "We shall have to detain the lady for a while."

What happened next—and was repeated in tens of thousands of cases later on—incensed the bride, the bridegroom and their families. A young S.S. doctor took her in hand. His job, he declared, was to determine the exact position and structure of her womb. Only thus could he decide whether she could hope to become the mother of at least four children, as the Fuehrer expected of every S.S. bride. Measurements were taken of her body; meticulously the young doctor entered details on an index card: length of legs and arms, waist, hips. "You are not going to measure me for a dress?" the girl asked, with a forced joke to hide her embarrassment. There were tears in her eyes when she left the S.S. star chamber. In later years thousands of S.S. marriages were postponed and abandoned to avoid the humiliating procedure. But soon S.S. men discovered that they could cut through the maze of administrative preparations and avoid the long wait for the completion of their dossier if they reported that the girl of their choice was expecting a child. Formalities, in such cases, could be completed after marriage if this enabled the erring couple to legitimatize their child. Thus, as he did later with deliberation, Himmler already encouraged illegitimacy.

Typical of the atmosphere in which his clean-living Nordic types grew up under the patronage of the S.S. was one explanation for indispensable need of the "Marriage Approval" which a high-ranking S.S. officer gave during his interrogation in an American prisoner-of-war cage: "We had to take such measures," he said, "not only to assure the purity of our race, but to protect our youngsters against worthless and dangerous associations. They were exposed to great moral dangers," he said. It appears that the smartly uniformed, carefully selected six-footers, blond and strong, were subjected to great temptations from many a woman: "Why," the S.S. officer said, "society women used to wait in their cars outside S.S. barracks and lure our innocent boys with week-end invitations and pocket money! Some of the boys were fair game for the lowest types of female humanity. We had to put a stop to all this!"

Slowly—because only ten to twelve out of every hundred aspirants conformed with the stringent standards of the Race Office—the S.S.

grew. Himmler had long since left the dingy little room in Landshut where he had started his career as a Nazi Party official, and had moved into smart offices in Munich. He left Hitler and his advisers to look after the political fortunes of the Party which now was strongly represented in the Reichstag. The S.A., which carried the political battle into the streets of Berlin and other German cities, were still the recognized "soldiers of the Party." But whenever the Fuehrer appeared in public a few of the black-uniformed, blond, strong men of the S.S., under the command of one Joseph ("Sepp") Dietrich, crowded around him to protect him from the attention of friend and enemy alike. The growth of the Party, however, also benefited the S.S. The number of applications, and with it the work of the main office and the Reichsfuehrer, grew. Contributions were collected and Himmler was able to build up a fund which was at his exclusive disposal. The work of gathering information was now carried on by some of his expert *aides*. The Himmler files grew with the number of supporters and enemies. An early S.S. pamphlet set out the functions of the S.S. as an "anti-Bolshevist fighting force."

Indeed, few people outside the leadership of the German Communist Party were better informed about Communist affairs than Heinrich Himmler and his staff. Soon he instructed trustworthy S.S. men in civilian clothes to infiltrate into the ranks of local Communist organizations and bring back information about their plans and personnel. Next to the file on Communism, Himmler's dossier on the Jewish question, on prominent Jews, Jewish organizations and activities, was the largest. But as the circle of S.S. activities, open and secret, widened, other files crowded his shelves. One, particularly bulky, was labelled "Freemasons"; there were some for "Socialists" and "Catholics." That which was marked "Party" Himmler kept under lock and key. It contained cards listing every member of the Nazi Party. And the entries under the names of men who stood high in Hitler's esteem were not always complimentary. Heinrich Himmler measured them by standards which he alone determined. Adolf Hitler and his entourage might disregard, overlook, or condone certain matters; Heinrich Himmler had his own ideas about them.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BLOND BEAST

"HAD he lived he would have become Germany's Fuehrer sooner or later!"

A hundred times, when I discussed the Hitler régime with the most prominent survivors of the Nazi period, I have heard that sentence. It referred to a tall, good-looking young man whom even his intimate friends used to call "The Blond Beast"—behind his back, of course. But at this stage of the Himmler story the "blond beast" was as yet unknown to the world at large, or even to wider circles of the German public. He was twenty-seven-year-old Lieutenant Reinhard Heydrich, son of a music teacher from Halle, where he was born. Serving in the Signals section of the Kiel establishment of the Germany Navy, Heydrich was a popular young officer, alert, clever—too clever for some of his superior officers—a quick-thinking, acid-tongued, good-looking, fair-haired fellow in whose features only the narrow, hard, blue eyes betrayed a streak of cruelty.

Heydrich had been in charge of coding and telecommunications, and had worked closely with the Intelligence section of the naval establishment. His record had been unblemished until one of his superiors gathered that, when "in his cups," he was talking more than was good for the silent service. Heydrich's friends, too, were not regarded with favour, because they included members of the disreputable Nazi Party who were held responsible for many of his extravagances. But Lieutenant Heydrich might have dispelled the small clouds which were gathering over his career had he not become involved in a more serious incident. Always a lady's man, Heydrich seemed at last to have settled down when he announced his engagement to the daughter of a high-ranking marine engineer. After a few months, however, the association threatened to have an inconvenient and untimely consequence. Lieutenant Heydrich's fiancée was expecting a child.

Her enraged father called on the naval officer to hasten preparations for an early marriage. Heydrich refused to implement his promise and produced a unique excuse. It was inconceivable, he said, that he should marry a girl who had indulged in pre-marital relations, even though he himself was the other party. His status

as an officer and gentleman forbade marriage to a girl of that type. With that he bowed himself out of the father's presence, but the old man acted swiftly and decisively. His complaint reached the supreme commander of the Navy, who asked Lieutenant Heydrich to resign before it would become necessary to dismiss him with ignominy. Heydrich had no alternative but to resign. Next day he presented himself at the Hamburg branch office of the S.S. as a new recruit and swiftly passed all tests with flying colours. A man of his calibre, at a time when the S.S. could not boast of many intellectual members, was assured a swift rise in this martial medium.

Heydrich's activities are, of course, a popular subject of the many revelations about the Nazi régime which have recently been produced by former member and servants of the régime. It is no accident that surviving S.S. leaders gleefully point to one report (cunningly disseminated in a book by an erstwhile S.S. leader) that Heydrich was really a half-Jew. Only when we have seen the part which he eventually played in the calculated murder of a million Jews can we fully appreciate the enormity of the insidious implication that the Jews have been exterminated by one of their own race. (A similar whispering campaign in Munich suggests that the missing link in Himmler's ancestry was a Jew; it is meant to serve a similar purpose.)

Heinrich Himmler, at a difficult stage in his career, was as yet unaware of the splendid acquisition which his Hamburg branch had been able to make. His ideas were in a ferment, his mind and time fully occupied with the administrative work which control of his growing organization involved. Although Munich was his headquarters, he saw less of Hitler than most other Party leaders whom a much greater distance separated from the Fuehrer's Berchtesgaden retreat. Already there were nearly ten thousand S.S. men under his command, and Himmler travelled to every corner of the Reich to inspect local units, to give them ceremonial flags and banners and to discuss appointments and promotions. In 1931 it was still a great event in Himmler's life when he received an invitation to join his Fuehrer for dinner. The personal association of the two men was never close, their conversation was formal, and Hitler, to the end, addressed his Reichsfuehrer as "Herr Himmler," signifying respect but also distance. Himmler would remain while, over cups of black coffee, political issues were discussed with Rudolf Hess, Hermann Goering, Alfred Rosenberg and Ernst Hanfstaengl, Hitler's personal friends, but Himmler's position would as yet not permit him to break into these conversations with more than a polite nod of approval or an occasional attempt to raise matters concerning the Black Guards.

The commanding position in which he found himself in his own organization, the reverence and blind submission of his S.S. men,

though implicit in their oath, was a matter of constant secret surprise to him. It was also a burden which forced on him decisions which he was not always ready to make and invested him with an authority to which he found it difficult to live up. As he had no real friends and was forced to work out his own solutions, he was torn by a permanent inner struggle and every step which he took was the result of a painful victory over conflicting emotions. As he sifted applications for admission to the S.S. he was rent by eagerness to add another recruit to his formation, and his determination to exclude every "inferior" type. He was unable to look S.S. candidates in the eye while he examined the shape of their heads, the colour of their hair, the structure of their bones, to reassure himself that they were true specimens of the Nordic race. Never did he have the courage to tell a man that he was not acceptable. At the same time he looked anxiously for signs of appreciation and gratitude whenever he told another young, blond giant that he would admit him to the S.S.

His spare time was spent discussing the affairs of the S.S. with such rough types as "Sepp" Dietrich, Hitler's friend, who usually took charge of the S.S. contingent to guard the Fuehrer at Party meetings. In the presence of Dietrich and legionnaires of his calibre, simple, primitive country boys, Himmler felt least restrained because he could impress them with his superior knowledge and articulation. What Darre told him one evening as he listened silently, Himmler told his S.S. soldiers on the next day while they, in turn, listened reverently. In his office he was studiously polite, almost gentle, as if afraid to offend and to make enemies. He remained the same long after his name spelt terror and fear, even among his personal staff. His loneliness in these early years was often pathetic. For those who could look behind his blank and expressionless features, and discern the tremor behind his clipped commands, it was obvious that he would be an easy prey for anybody who, able to dispel his suspicions which were born of fear and uncertainty, could subtly find a way to his heart and yet be strong enough to exert an influence on him. Though the Reichsfuehrer did not know it, such a person was already in the wings waiting to step into the gap in Himmler's personal and political life. It was Reinhard Heydrich.

When Himmler, during a visit to Hamburg, met the new recruit he was immediately impressed by his bearing, his sharp brain, his language and his military background. Heydrich was young enough, Himmler thought, to be moulded in the right pattern, worthy of early promotion and of a place in the leadership of the S.S. He ordered him to report at his headquarters in Munich. From the autumn of 1931 Heydrich was rarely far from Himmler. "What we need," Himmler explained to his new lieutenant, "is a highly

efficient communications system. Information, intelligence, is one of the principal problems of the S.S. I have," Himmler elucidated, "made elaborate plans for a civilian organization within the S.S. —a *Sicherheits Dienst* (Security Service) staffed by the most reliable and intelligent of our men." Himmler's proposition was that Heydrich should use his service experience to organize the Security Service and to lead it. It was a flattering invitation. To the ambitious ex-officer it seemed to offer tremendous possibilities. Resentment about the failure of his naval career was already beginning to mark him psychologically. He was no man's friend—a most valuable quality for the task he was about to undertake. He threw himself wholeheartedly into his work and already his first moves inaugurated a novel and ominous stage in the development of Himmler and the S.S.

Himmler had always taken great pride in his administrative abilities. But the internal organization of the S.S. had grown haphazardly and its administrative affairs were in sad contrast to the impeccable public appearances of the S.S. units. Heydrich, far from confining himself to the task with which he had been entrusted, at once set out to exploit Himmler's personal support and confidence to assume responsibility over a far wider territory. Rarely would he use his rank as S.S. Brigade Leader (roughly corresponding to that of an Army brigadier) to issue orders on the strength of his own authority. It had not taken him long to size up his chief's weaknesses, his vanity, his inferiority complex which made him reserve all decisions to himself. Subtly he suggested for Himmler's "consideration" his own "vague ideas"—as he described them at the time—and invariably Himmler gave quick expression to them and lost no time implementing them "by order of the Reichsfuehrer."

It was the old, old story of the mediocrity who, by diligence, patience and subservience, has plodded his way to a position beyond his real capacity, leaning heavily on the type of friend and assistant who seems always available to exploit such a situation. It was the story of the assistant who pays lip-service to the authority of his chief but undermines it subtly, stealthily, building up his own position until it has become unassailable. The association of Himmler and Heydrich had not lasted many months before Himmler's voice was saying what Heydrich thought. But, in allowing himself to be guided first by Rosenberg and Darre and now by Heydrich, Himmler, driven by an uncontrollable urge for self-assertion, invariably carried the ideas of his mentors to extremes. It seemed his only excuse for accepting guidance so feebly and often uncritically. Heydrich denied himself the triumph of allowing even the faintest notion about the nature of his association with Himmler to get abroad. It was only much later that it became apparent that

the servant was giving orders to the master. Heydrich revealed himself as an outstanding personality. He had changed a great deal since his Navy days. His work was his only pleasure, personal power his only aim. To strengthen his authority over the Security Service, the S.D., he separated it from the uniformed formations of the S.S. to which its members had hitherto been attached. S.D. officers were strictly forbidden to discuss politics with their comrades. What they learned about Communists, Jews, Freemasons, the "political clergy," all of whom they were bound to fight as the enemies of the Party, was only for Heydrich's ear. Eventually, with special field-offices and command-posts, the S.D. organization embraced over three thousand men, answerable only to the Main Office of the Security Service of which Heydrich was the head.

Heydrich's organizational talents, at the same time, helped to departmentalize and streamline the amorphous S.S. organizations. One by one new departments came into being with their own leaders and they kept a tight grip on their branch of the service. When his work was finished there had come into being an efficient command structure with an office of the Reichsfuehrer's personal staff, a Personal Department, an Administrative Office, a Department of S.S. Justice (to deal with disciplinary matters), a Medical Office, one for Social Services, another for Communications, and an Inspectorate for Physical Training. To these Heydrich added a Main Office, his own Security Service Office and the Race Office to which a Settlement Branch was later attached. Separate departments dealt with Training and with Supply, but every one of these offices had a number of subdivisions, tentacles reaching into every sphere of human activity. They were ingeniously designed to duplicate the machinery of State and government in such a way as to enable the S.S. leadership to take over these functions at a moment's notice. Though Hitler never envisaged such a possibility, it was strongly in Heydrich's mind from the outset and, had it not been for his early death, the S.S. might not have remained "only" a state within the State. Just as the ideological demands on the S.S. were regarded as the ideal with which every National Socialist and eventually every German would one day have to conform, so was the organization planned to embrace the whole country.

The mass of S.S. men were enrolled in the so-called *Allgemeine* (general) S.S., volunteer "political soldiers," who were called out for parades at week-ends, marching behind banners and flags in their locality. Like the S.A., they were organized on military lines from ordinary S.S. men (Private) to Standartenfuehrer (Colonel) and to Obergruppenfuehrer (Upper Group Leader, the equivalent of a full General). An inordinately large officer corps, more variegated N.C.O. ranks than those of the Army, were designed to satisfy the typical German craving for titles and authority. They lorded

it over *Stuerme* (storms), the equivalent of a platoon, which formed *Sturmbanne* (battalions), eventually *Standarten* (regiments), *Abschnitte* (sectors—brigades) and *Oberabschnitte* (main sectors—divisions)—each unit covering a district or province of the country until there was no corner of the Reich in which, even in those early days, the S.S. man was not in evidence. Himmler and Heydrich were undismayed by the fact that in the eyes of the Party the S.S. was as yet only a junior department of the S.A. Himmler's sense of "mission," and Heydrich's more practical conception of power based on S.S. élite, drove them on their fanatical pursuit of S.S. expansion. It was Heydrich who first conceived a new technique to cement the power which command over blindly loyal, determined, single-minded Party soldiers guaranteed in the unstable political atmosphere of Germany.

He left to Himmler the task of recruiting the rank and file and began to look for potential leaders with qualifications for more elaborate assignments—and was determined to surround himself with young, energetic, ruthless and intelligent men prepared to follow him. Ideological principles did not bother him, for he knew that there were thousands of able but frustrated men like himself whose loyalty he could buy with the promise of high office (plus a salary), an attractive uniform, unquestioned authority over the lower ranks and great prospects when the Party, as seemed certain in 1932, would sooner or later take over the government of Germany. It was, he thought, easier to turn an able man into a National Socialist and an S.S. soldier than to instil ability into the average Nazi or S.S. recruit. There was as yet, Heydrich explained, no need that these men—some of them in important positions in the Civil Service, in the Army, in industry—should reveal their allegiance to Party or S.S. as long as they consented to work for the cause and thus obtain a stake in the future which would surely belong to National Socialism. There was even room for "supporting members," who needed not even to be members of the Party as long as they were prepared to pay a monthly contribution to S.S. funds. "The Association of Supporting Members," said the S.S. constitution, quoting a Hitler order, "is of the greatest importance for the S.S. and must not be disturbed in its activities by any other department of the Party."

From the ranks of these secret, silent supporters, the sleeping partners in the S.S. whom Heydrich inducted into the organization, Himmler was able to pick the most suitable candidates for high office. He was already looking upon the S.S. as a "Holy Order" dedicated to a great crusade. Tied to his desk for long and weary hours every day, he would return home in the evening to immerse himself in books of history to study, as he said, the destiny of his "Holy Order." He found his clue in the story of the Crusades and

in the constitution of the medieval *Deutsche Ritterorden* (the Teutonic Knights) whose fortunes he followed through the centuries. That Order of deeply religious men who dedicated themselves to eternal chastity, renunciation of their own will (to let God's will prevail), obedience unto death and poverty, to fight under the sign of the Cross, became Himmler's example for his S.S. But it was not easy for him to reconcile his admiration for the Teutonic Knights with his attacks on the Catholic Church, Rome and the German clergy of all denominations and his strong anti-religious views.

Darre, once more, helped him to turn an intellectual somersault which made it possible for him, unblushingly, to mention the Catholic Teutonic Knights in the same breath with his Holy Order of the S.S. and to borrow the ideas of the Crusaders for his own purpose. "There is a mistaken idea," Darre said, and Himmler echoed him, "that the Order of the Teutonic Knights owes its origin to monkish ideals and only developed its martial qualities in the time of the crusades. . . ." Darre eventually announced his solution of the dilemma. "I cannot accept the contention," he said, "that this development has un-Germanic roots. . . . It is true that every type of monkdom was alien to the old Germanic communities. But one must not overlook the fact that the idea of a martial Order, living without women and under strict discipline, can already be found among heathenish Germanic types and conforms with Germanic ideas."

In a hundred speeches and treatises Himmler and Darre developed a theory to prove how much the "Vikings" and the Teutonic Knights had in common. They found a parallel for everything in the history of the *Deutsche Ritterorden.* There was the Battle of Tannenberg in 1440, which (to quote Darre and Himmler) was not lost by any means because the Teutonic Knights had to submit to military superiority, but because of treason and defection —in the same way in which the First World War was lost. From this defeat developed the tragic condition of a "People without (living) Space." And yet the Order survived to fight for the greatness of Germany. In Himmler's history books a straight line leads from Tannenberg of 1440 "when the doors to the East were closed" to Tannenberg of 1914, the First World War battle in which the German armies under Hindenburg defeated the Russians and thus opened these doors once more.

Could there be a better guide, then, than these lessons from history? Could there be a better instrument with which to apply them to modern Germany than a new holy order? That new Order was the S.S. Himmler had reached a point where he regarded the S.S. as the rightful heirs of the Teutonic Knights, himself as a new Grand Master, as powerful as his predecessor who was permitted

to sit in the Council of Princes. Avidly he accepted a philosophy concocted with the ingredients of conveniently selected historical half-truths which seemed to justify Germany's *Drang nach dem Osten* (drive to the East) and dovetailed perfectly with Hitler's political purpose of war against eastern Bolshevism. While it was the divine right, nay duty, of his Order to implement this philosophy, this policy and strategy, it followed logically that prospective victims, the peoples of the East who stood in the way of fulfilment, were the enemies and had to be fought and annihilated. Himmler was as yet not prepared, even in private conversation, to admit the length to which he would go to make "divine right" prevail. Before he could turn against the external enemies there were many obstacles to be surmounted nearer home.

Heydrich, in his search for suitable S.S. leaders, had been struck by the low mental qualities of the average S.S. man, Himmler's new knight, which had hitherto been condoned in the maniacal preoccupation with their physical appearance. He suggested that special schools, *Junker-Schulen* (*Junker* Schools, *Junker* meaning knight), should be founded where prospective leaders could not only be trained in sports and discipline, but could also receive a rudimentary education in history, geography and military science. One such school was eventually founded at Toelz, Bavaria. Plans were made to co-operate with Dr. Robert Ley, another Nazi leader and labour expert, in whose *National Politische Anstalten* (National Political Institutions), *Napolas* for short, selected youngsters, even though not up to the physical standards of the S.S., could similarly be trained and prepared for leading positions in the civilian branches of the Party. Both, in *Junker-Schulen* and *Napolas*, only the negative aspects of the National Socialist programme were emphasized—foremost among them the destruction of the Party's enemies inside Germany. To harden the minds of these young men against such antiquated Christian virtues as mercy and pity was the principal task of the teachers. The next was to develop self-confidence and a feeling of superiority, a consciousness of Race and all it implied in dealing with even the average German. To regard other races, particularly Slavs and Jews, as inferior was the logical conclusion at which the young Nazi hopefuls were expected to arrive almost automatically.

In thinking on these lines and in taking steps to practise these theories Himmler at the time was far ahead of Hitler. Today many S.S. officers describing themselves as "misguided" are trying to produce an alibi and revert back to an occasion in 1932 when Hitler addressed a gathering of S.S. *Junkers*, students and recruits in the Senate Hall in Munich. "You need have no hesitation," Hitler told them, "to swear the holy oath of obedience, because we shall never ask you to do anything which your conscience might forbid you to

do!" "How were we to know what he was going to ask from us later on?" they say today. But they are missing the point or refuse to admit more truthfully that such insidious schooling and such cunning, persistent propaganda had dulled their consciences and made them immune against any normal feeling for "inferior" races. In Nuremberg, fourteen years later, an S.S. general, Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, wartime chief of the S.S. anti-partisan units in the East, who had murdered tens of thousands of civilians in cold blood, referring to their campaign of mass murder, admitted that "if for years, for decades, a doctrine is preached to the effect that the Slav race is an inferior race, that the Jews are not even human beings, then an explosion of this sort is inevitable."

Himmler worked night and day elaborating the programme revising the curriculum of the *Junker* Schools. Sometimes, driven by an irresistible urge he would rise at 5 a.m., rouse his household, servants and chauffeur and demand to be driven to Toelz, "to watch my beautiful youngsters arising for another day of dedication to the Nordic ideal." Eyes aglow, hardly restraining tears of emotion, the Reichsfuehrer would inspect embarrassed boys rubbing sleepy eyes, follow them into the showers. "He seemed to have difficulty in keeping his hands off them . . ." one of his former *aides* told me in Munich, where he now works in a hotel.

The school's curriculum was devoted to the impregnation of the students with National Socialist *Weltanschauung*—theory in the mornings, practice in the afternoons. Study of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Rosenberg's *Mythus* . . . the teaching of history, as Heinrich Himmler understood it, went hand in hand with instruction in military tactics, the history and handling of weapons from the bow and arrow to the sub-machine gun, aeronautics, intelligence, tactics. The afternoons were taken up with sport, gymnastics, riding. Himmler's eyes roved admiringly over the rows of young fellows, each at least six feet three inches tall. This was the breeding ground for his new Nazi aristocracy, and Himmler flattered himself that he had succeeded in mixing in this school the sons of peasants and the sons of real aristocrats, to be moulded into units in which it was impossible to distinguish the one from the other. No wonder that later when surviving inmates of concentration camps were asked to identify some of their torturers they were unable to tell them apart. The young officers of the S.S., to any outsider, looked as much alike as the sheep in a prize herd.

Their education completed, their conscience hardened, the S.S. *Junkers*, on receiving their commissions, were asked to swear the oath of allegiance and to subscribe to the guiding slogan of the S.S.: "My Honour is Loyalty." They were now physically and mentally prepared for the day when they could openly take up arms against the "enemy." That day was fast approaching. In Berlin

the political battle raged and the Nazi Party's fortunes were in the balance. Successive elections had increased their representation in the Reichstag—Heinrich Himmler had already gained a seat in 1929. Joseph Goebbels beat the propaganda drum, Hermann Goering, on behalf of his Fuehrer, was negotiating with wealthy industrialists to obtain financial support for the Party and imploring the ageing President, Field-Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, to give Hitler a political mandate. Confident of the success of their manoeuvres, encouraged by the strength of popular support, anticipating the call of the Reich President and Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the Party leaders gathered to form a shadow government. Since he could not guess that Hindenburg, when he eventually called on him, would confine Nazi representation in a coalition government to a handful of ministries, Hitler selected a man for every post in the Cabinet. There was no post for Heinrich Himmler.

It was once more Reinhard Heydrich who urged the unhappy, disappointed and hesitant Himmler to stake a claim at least for one of the subsidiary appointments which the Fuehrer would be able to make as soon as he was Chancellor. The S.A. stormtroopers, it had long been agreed, would at once be enrolled as auxiliary police, S.A. leaders would be called into leading police positions. The S.S., Heydrich argued, was a super-S.A. and therefore obviously destined to share in the S.A. police duties. Prominent S.S. officers should receive some of the choicer, higher police appointments, and the Reichsfuehrer S.S. naturally the best available. Since S.S. activities had concentrated on Bavaria, it would be only fair for Himmler to become at least Police President of his home town, Munich. When Himmler, goaded by Heydrich, deferentially staked his claim, Hitler was relieved. It was a small request from an old, deserving comrade. Though, after a few months of high-pitched expectancy, Nazi prospects had once more receded and the political battle was going badly, Hitler unhesitatingly promised Himmler the job. It was the signal for frantic activity in the Munich headquarters of the S.S. Now Himmler and Heydrich had some real work to do. For many months past they had been talking about the *Machtergreifung*—the day when the Nazi Party would seize power in the State. It would be the signal for sweeping action against the "enemies." Day after day the two men pored over files and lists of Communists, Socialists and Jews whom, they agreed, it would be impossible to leave at large in a National Socialist State.

Himmler, as usual, looked for guidance in the history books. When, a few months after the end of the Second World War, his library was discovered, investigators found a number of books which threw light on his mentality. While Himmler's adversaries thought they were coining suitable insults for him by describing him as a "second Fouché" and a "modern Torquemada," he was in reality

seeking inspiration for his future job from the lives of these two men. Fouché's problems towards the end of the eighteenth century, when he was appointed Police Minister in Paris, seemed not dissimilar from his own, Himmler thought. The ups and downs in his career were comparable to Himmler's own struggle. His campaign against hostile pamphleteers and editors was a model worth following in the forthcoming battle against the democratic Press of Germany. Fouché's fight against the reactionary aristocrats had a parallel in Heinrich Himmler's Germany. And that a prominent police position might eventually lead, as it did in Fouché's case, to the control of the Ministry of Interior, the key position for power in the State, was never absent from Himmler's mind. Similarly, Thomas Torquemada's activities as Inquisitor-General of Spain in the fifteenth century showed many features applicable to the Germany of 1932 and 1933. Torquemada was determined to expel the Jews; so was Himmler. Torquemada had his eyes on the wealth of the Jews; so had Himmler. If Torquemada acted in the name of the Church, Himmler would pursue a similar policy in the name of a new German religion. "Himmler," one of his *aides* said, "who could hate deeply, was never reluctant to learn from his enemies. Indeed, though he refused to admit it, he secretly aimed at building up his Holy S.S. Order on the model of Jesuits who were one of the main butts of his campaigns."

Because Himmler had reason to fear that the German workers would violently oppose the appointment of a Hitler government, he devised a strategy to combat any revolutionary attempt. Orders were issued to S.S. Sectors in every province of the Reich to be ready for a "call to arms" at short notice. Into the Munich headquarters poured suggestions and requests for a "free hand" against the opponents of the Party. "Sepp" Dietrich was given the task of guarding the Fuehrer in the critical days, and though Hitler when dealing with the Party's political soldiers was still thinking in terms of the S.A., Himmler organized his own army as if they alone would have to guarantee the undisputed rule of the Nazi Party.

He also decided to strengthen his personal staff and, in anticipation of new battles to be fought and new duties to be performed, chose as his personal adjutant Captain Karl Wolff, ex-officer of the Imperial German Army, who had distinguished himself in the First World War. Captain Wolff, who had joined the Party and the S.S. in 1931 in an honorary capacity, he says, had struck up a friendship with Himmler, who was impressed by Wolff's aristocratic associations—he was married to a lady of high birth—and his smooth manners. For two years Wolff had served as A.D.C. to General Franz Ritter von Epp, the Governor of Bavaria. Now, with the rank of a Sturmbannfuehrer, equivalent of captain's rank, he joined Himmler's personal staff and remained one of his closest associates for the next

ten years. Wolff may not have known it at the time, but his appointment was one of many S.S. moves to weave strong personal links between the Black Guards and elements of the German Officers' Corps. Himmler had accepted Heydrich's argument and contention that only in close co-operation with the Army could the Nazi Party really succeed. With a *fingerspitzengefuehl*—a feeling in the tips of the fingers—the peculiar German term which denotes extreme sensitivity for forthcoming developments, Heydrich had sensed the Reichswehr's implacable hostility against the brown battalions of the S.A., whom their chief, Captain Ernst Roehm, was clearly grooming to take over the Army's functions in a National Socialist State. Himmler agreed with Heydrich that it was wiser to join forces with the Army than to allow the S.S. to remain an appendix of Roehm's S.A.

So immersed was Himmler in the preparations for the day that it took him completely unawares when, indeed surprisingly, it proved to be 30 January, 1933. Hitler, in top-hat and cut-away, took the oath as Chancellor; Hermann Goering became Minister without Portfolio; Dr. Wilhelm Frick, an old Party member and Reichstag Deputy, was appointed Minister of the Interior. Himmler's *aides* were surprised to see the Reichsfuehrer highly elated about his appointment as Police President of Munich, which they regarded as an insignificant post for a man whose position as supreme commander of almost thirty thousand hand-picked, incomparable, loyal and determined S.S. men seemed to denote much greater authority. Himmler himself, his brother Gebhard said, tried to disguise his infinite pleasure and gratification. When the family gathered to congratulate him he shook his head sadly. "How tragic," he said, "that my new duties will bring me into contact only with the lowest species of humanity, with criminals, Jews and enemies of the State, when all my thoughts and endeavours are for the élite of our race. But the Fuehrer has assigned this duty to me. I shall not shirk it."

CHAPTER FOUR

DESTINATION DACHAU

HEINRICH HIMMLER'S duty! To Heinrich Himmler his first official function seemed like a gateway to destiny, his own and that of the German people. But after years of study devoted to his chosen task to map out the future of the German people, after months of industrious planning for measures to give substance to his philosophy, Himmler and his men in Munich were forced to look to Berlin for a lead. The bang with which Adolf Hitler had appeared on the political scene as Chancellor of Germany had drowned the squeaks of his followers in Munich which had temporarily been reduced to a sideshow. Himmler made a speech which just found a tiny echo in a corner of *Der Voelkischer Beobachter.* Among those present at the Reichsfuehrer's first public appearance as a State official, Hitler's Party paper mentioned Reinhard Heydrich. But so little known was the man behind the Reichsfuehrer, even in Party circles, that his name was mis-spelt and not by accident. To the people of Germany, if they took any notice at all, Heydrich remained Heyderich for some time to come.

Himmler anxiously watched the Nazi Government in the capital of the Reich. There, Hermann Goering, who had assumed control of the Ministry of the Interior, at once provided a legal basis for the Government's illegal schemes. With his decree of 28 February, 1933, "for the Protection of Nation and State," he abolished all civil liberties of the German people. Paragraph one of the new law stated explicitly that "restrictions on personal freedom are permissible." The decree followed the Reichstag fire, started by Nazi hirelings as a pretext for a blow against the Left-wing parties. Its direct result was the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship. It sanctioned arrest and imprisonment without indictment. To carry the new principle into practice Hermann Goering created a new police organization, the Secret State Police, Gestapo for short, which was designed and destined to become the most powerful instrument of Nazi rule. Goering inducted many of his old S.A. friends into the police organization.

A special decree elevated the S.A. stormtroopers to the rank of "auxiliary police officers." The brown-shirted rowdies who had often previously terrorized the streets of Berlin and other German cities

preened themselves in their cloak of legality—but otherwise carried on just as before. Brown-shirted hordes roamed the streets of Berlin, broke into private flats and offices, occupied the headquarters of the political parties of the Left and carried away their officials by the hundred. They started a wave of indiscriminate arrests, beating their victims as they took them to police stations and prisons until they were full to overflowing. It was the same in every city of the Reich. In Breslau, S.A. leader Heines decided to hold prisoners in an improvised barbed-wire stockade on the outskirts of the city—and the first concentration camp was born. Other S.A. police officials followed his example. They took the opportunity of arresting personal enemies under political pretexts—or even without such formality ransacked the homes of prominent Jews, looting, smashing what they could not remove. S.S. men in all sectors just tagged along with the S.A. without any obvious plan, but in most cases more ruthless, cruel, less restrained even than the stormtroopers. Their training had hardened and prepared them for opportunities just like this. For years one of their marching songs had anticipated a "Night of the Long Knives." As dusk fell over Germany the S.S. knives came out.

To Berlin, as observer and representative, Himmler dispatched a high-ranking S.S. leader, Kurt Daluege, who joined Goering's Prussian police with the task of co-ordinating S.S. and S.A. activities. One of his first moves was to send his men on a hunt for Nazi dissentients, for "faithless, treacherous former comrades" whom Himmler and Heydrich had always regarded as more dangerous than their open political opponents. Gregor Strasser, Himmler's first chief in the Party, had often crossed Hitler's political path, and in 1932 had retired in disgust from Party activities when Hitler's policy carried the day. Himmler had marked him down as an enemy, but the Reichsfuehrer had as yet not acquired the courage of his convictions and dared not touch his erstwhile protector. Instead he ordered Daluege to arrest Gregor's brother, Otto Strasser, but when the S.S. arrived at his flat Otto Strasser had already left the country with the first wave of refugees from Nazism. Another Nazi official, S.A. leader Stennes, had equally invited the wrath of the S.S. and was to be Daluege's next victim. An S.S. horde broke into his home, turned it into a shambles, molested his wife, but could not find him. Goering, not as bloodthirsty as Heydrich and Himmler, had arrested Stennes to save him from the S.S. and later helped him to escape abroad. Hundreds of other Nazi "oppositionists" were less fortunate and soon joined Communists and Jews behind the barbed wire of the impromptu stockades.

On the Munich home ground of the S.S. the competition of the S.A. was not as fierce as elsewhere, and Himmler's Black Guards dominated the streets. Following the lead from Berlin, a concentration camp was hurriedly established in Dachau, not far from

Munich. The stockade filled so rapidly that conditions in the camp soon deteriorated. There was little water, less to eat, only a few barracks to accommodate men and women who had been torn from their homes and not allowed to take anything except the clothes they were wearing at the time of their arrest. Himmler decided to put his very own concentration camp on a firmer and more permanent basis. In a speech he declared that Munich, always the capital of the movement since 1923, the year of Hitler's abortive beerhouse putsch, would "become a fortress in the battle against the soul- and state-destroying poison of Marxism, the rock on which the enemies of National Socialism would break their heads."

From among the general S.S. he called for volunteers to take over guard duties at Dachau. Now that the S.S. was a State organization he could afford to offer them long-term-service contracts. Any S.S. man willing to sign on for twelve years, he declared, would be eligible for the post of a permanent concentration-camp guard. Quickly a new S.S. formation was created and Himmler conferred on it the significant description of "Death Head" units. He granted them the right to wear special insignia, the skull and crossbones, on their caps and lapels. After the defeat of Germany, S.S. officers pretended that these symbols were meant to convey the Death Head units' dedication to service "unto death"—their own death. No, it was not their job to murder their opponents. But whatever the original intention underlying the choice of the name (alternatively said to have only carried on the tradition of a famous Imperial German Guards Regiment, the Death Head Hussars, of which the former Crown Prince was Commander-in-Chief), they at once began to dole out death to others. It was many years before it eventually became their own deserved fate. To command the Death Head units Himmler chose one of his own circle of roughnecks, Theodor Eicke, who had implicitly accepted Himmler's theory that non-Nazis, Jews, Socialists, Communists, Catholics, Freemasons and Pacifists were sub-human and destined for extinction.

Under Heydrich's instructions, in the meantime, prominent prisoners were confined to Munich police prison to be questioned by trusted young men with whom he had surrounded himself. Among them was Walter Schellenberg, a typical new S.S. recruit, as yet only twenty-two years old, whom Heydrich had entrusted with special duties in the Security Service. Now Schellenberg set about the political prisoners to extract from them the secrets of their respective organizations under the threat of torture. For weeks such men were held in dark cells, starved and bullied until his interrogation produced results. When Schellenberg had done with them an order for their confinement in a concentration camp was signed. It was a simple document, but it served as a pattern for what virtually became the death-warrant of tens of thousands, until even this for-

mality was abandoned. Intellectuals were the earliest victims—Stefan Lorrant, the brilliant editor, who made a great name for himself in London later and described his experiences in an illuminating account[1]—was one of them.

A simple *Schutzhaftbefehl* (Order for Protective Custody), the euphemistic description for detention in a Gestapo prison or concentration camp, sealed the fate of many. GEHEIME STAATSPOLIZEI, BRIENNERSTRASSE (address of the Munich police headquarters), it said at the top of this scrap of paper (PRINZ ALBRECHTSTRASSE, the Berlin Gestapo address, was later used for the whole of Germany). Only name, date and place of birth of the prisoner, his nationality and religion were enumerated. ("In case of non-Aryans, State Race," it said on the form.) There was a cryptic order: "In accordance with Paragraph 1 of the Order for the Protection of Nation and State, to be taken into protective custody." A small space was reserved for a statement of the "reasons," which were usually confined to such vague sentences as this: "The investigation of the State Police shows that, by his demeanour and attitude, he endangers the existence and security of State and People." Old men were taken from their sick beds under such orders, juveniles from their families, women from their homes. Destination was Dachau.

The world was as yet not aware of the nature of concentration camps, and surviving S.S. leaders are eager to explain that "excesses" only began to occur much later under the impact of reverses in the war. But it is only necessary to dip into the large dossiers presented at the Nuremberg trial to show that the campaign of deliberate cruelty already started in the first months of Himmler's reign in Bavaria. "On 24 May, 1933," says one of the thousands of similar reports, checked and counter-checked, verified and proved by admissions of some of the guilty men, "the thirty-years-old, single attorney-at-law, Dr. Alfred Strauss, from Munich, who was in the concentration camp Dachau as a prisoner under protective custody, was killed by two pistol shots from S.S. man Johann Kantschuster, who escorted him on a walk outside the fenced part of the camp. Kantschuster gives the following report: He himself had to stop . . . Strauss proceeded on his way. Suddenly Strauss broke away towards the bushes located at a distance of about six metres away. When Kantschuster noticed it, he fired two shots at the fugitive from a distance of about eight metres; whereupon Strauss collapsed dead. On the same day a judicial inspection of the locality took place. Strauss was lying on the edge of the wood. Leather slippers were on his feet. Two bullets had entered the back of his head. The body showed several black and blue spots and also open wounds. . . ."

Manifestly, the camp guard's version of this murder was dis-

[1] *I Was Hitler's Prisoner*, by Stefan Lorrant.

proved by the investigation of the camp authorities. Kantschuster was, in fact, indicted for murder, but, as in many similar cases, received only symbolic punishment. Official Nazi phraseology produced a new term for such murders: "Shot while trying to escape," it said peremptorily. As the number of murders perpetrated under similar circumstances increased investigations became more perfunctory—were eventually left to the camp commandant, who normally reported to head office that another prisoner had been "shot while . . ." Any concentration-camp guard responsible for the death of an inmate was automatically suspended from duty for three days "while an investigation was in progress." Many murderous guards welcomed these three days' holiday.

It was not long before the S.S. men, to obtain three days' respite from onerous duties, picked themselves a prisoner to shoot and kill at the slightest pretence. In co-operation with Himmler himself, Theodor Eicke worked out a set of rules for his concentration camp. The document was not completed until later in the year —the regulations came in force in October, 1933—but the spirit which permeated them prevailed from the first day of the Himmler régime in Munich. The guiding principle was stated in the preamble: "Tolerance means weakness! In the light of this conception, punishment will be mercilessly handed out. . . . Let it be a warning to agitating policitians and intellectual provocateurs of every kind. Be on your guard not to be caught, for otherwise it will be your neck and you will be silenced. . . ."

Floggings, solitary confinement, inclusion in punishment labour units, executions, were the punishments prescribed for the slightest infraction of the stringent camp rules: "By virtue of the law on revolutionaries," said the Himmler–Eicke regulation, "the following offenders in the camp, considered as agitators, will be hanged. Anyone who, for the purpose of agitating . . . holds meetings or makes inciting speeches, forms cliques or loiters around . . . who, for the purpose of supplying the propaganda of the opposition with atrocity stories . . . collects *true* or false information . . . talks about it to others . . . passes it on to released prisoners . . . seeks contact with the outside world . . . gives advice . . . or supports such undertakings in any way whatsoever." The strictest censorship was imposed on all events inside the camps.

"*Wir haben nichts davon gewusst!*" ("We knew nothing of it!") was the chorus with which Germany answered the world when details of concentration-camp practices were revealed after the war. "I had no idea these things happened!" Karl Wolff, Himmler's A.D.C., told me in 1951 (and I spared him the embarrassment of pointing to the correspondence, signed by him, in which he dealt with the murderous medical experiments on concentration-camp prisoners). How did Himmler react? It was difficult to obtain an

honest answer to this question, because all those who were ever in contact with Himmler deny that "they knew" and therefore cannot or will not comment. But, while they were held in allied prisons, notably Landsberg, some of Himmler's *aides* confided that they were aghast at the complete lack of his sensitivity. They had to report "excesses" by concentration-camp guards, they said. Himmler treated them as routine disciplinary matters, even if they involved the slow and painful death of many victims. Since these victims, in his view, were "subhuman," their sufferings or death did not move him. He knew, but did not care.

Was Himmler ashamed of the camps or of what went on in them? That, it appeared, was by no means the purpose of the secrecy with which he decided to surround them. Officially he declared that wayward citizens would be re-educated in the camps and, if possible, fitted for a return to the German community. But while deadly punishment threatened anyone circulating even "true information" about Dachau and other camps, Himmler ordered Heydrich's Security Service to launch an ingenious rumour campaign to terrify the people as yet at liberty. These rumours, if that were possible, painted conditions in the camps as even worse than they were. With half the German population opposed to Nazism, Himmler realized that it would be impossible to lock up every anti-Nazi. The camps, he decided, should serve as a most effective deterrent for all those who planned to wrest power from the Nazi Government. By encouraging cruelty and violence, by circulating these rumours, Himmler held a permanent threat of a similar fate over the head of every active or would-be opponent of the Party. He had no hesitation in putting on paper such further instructions as, for instance: "In serious cases there is no objection to increasing the deterrent effect by spreading of rumours . . . that . . . according to hearsay . . . in view of the seriousness of his case, the arrested man will not be released for two or three years . . ." and eventually: "The Reichsfuehrer S.S. . . . will order flogging in addition to detention. . . ." It was left to the ideologically trained camp commandants and soldiers of the Death Head units to make the best use of their powers over defenceless prisoners.

As the number of prisoners increased, concentration camps sprang up all over Germany. Main camps were surrounded by a cluster of subsidiary camps. It is impossible to mention them all, but some have since become synonyms for terror and mass murder: Buchenwald, near Weimar; Dachau, near Munich; Bergen-Belsen and Neuengamme (where, with poetic justice, thousands of S.S. leaders and concentration-camp guards were interned by the Allies in 1945), both near Hamburg; Niederhagen, in the Ruhr; Sachsenhausen (Oranienburg); and the women's camp of Ravensbrueck, not far from Berlin; Mauthausen, in Austria (after 1938),

and many others. As the Nazi steam-roller rumbled across Europe hundreds of new camps sprang up in occupied territories. On the map of Europe, painted in blood, were the names of Auschwitz, in Poland; Hertogenbosch, in Holland; Natzweiler, for Frenchmen —to mention only a few. Protective custody became the most effective means of the Nazi terror, and Himmler's patient work on the rules of detention made him the real architect of that terror. While Hermann Goering and his Gestapo in Berlin still went about their grim business in an indiscriminate, haphazard attempt to eliminate the opposition, Himmler approached the task in a cool, methodical manner. It reached near-perfection with his order (issued a few years later) which stated bluntly: "In order to achieve a further deterrent effect . . . length of period of custody must in no case be made known, even if the Reichsfuehrer S.S. . . . or Chief of the Security Police and Security Service has already fixed it. . . . The term 'Commitment to a Concentration Camp' (as a substitute for the original Order for Protective Custody) is to be openly announced."

Once the first steps had been taken on this murderous road the consequences were almost inevitable. There were in 1933 still altogether eight million people who, in Himmler's words, had voted for Marxism. Some of them might be converted to Nazism, but those who were determined to resist, together with the Jews who were ineligible for conversion, were destined for the concentration camps. For a while he kept up the pretence that the camps were a "school for good citizenship," and, almost mockingly, signs were put up in Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen promising prisoners release as soon as their re-education was completed. But it was not long before the average concentration camp was run on the lines of Flossenburg (established a little later), of which a report of the American War Crimes Branch said—to sum up conditions in all other camps—that it could best be described as "a factory dealing in death. Hunger and starvation rations, sadism, inadequate clothing, medical neglect, disease, beatings, hangings, freezing, forced-hand hanging, forced suicides, shooting, all played a major rôle. . . . Prisoners were murdered at random; spite killings of Jews were common. Injections of poison and shooting in the neck were everyday occurrences. Epidemics of typhus and spotted fever were permitted to run rampant as a means of eliminating prisoners. Life . . . meant nothing. Killing became a common thing, so common that a quick death was welcomed. . . ."

Prisoners were eventually classified into groups (and later nationalities). A few pages later in the Nazi history, when the Himmler plan had fully matured, prisoners in Dachau or Buchenwald concentration camps (other camps were constructed on their pattern) were kept behind an ever-expanding barbed-wire enclosure,

the wire being charged with electric current. A big doorway flanked by towers and manned by S.S. guards with machine-guns was the entrance to this modern inferno. Outside, built by the prisoners, soon grew a colony of pleasant little villas, the homes of camp commandant, other camp officials and the officers of the S.S. guards. There were, still outside the barbed-wire enclosure, S.S. barracks and canteens, garages, a riding school, an S.S. hospital. Inside were the barracks in which the prisoners slept in three-tiered bunks—the barracks grouped around the square on which twice every day the weary, work-worn inmates assembled for a long and arduous roll-call. As time went on a block was reserved for the killing of prisoners. In Buchenwald one barrack housed an elaborate installation to perform "Action Bullet," a novel technique to kill prisoners by a shot in the neck as they were supposedly being measured. After 1938 one small barrack was reserved as a cinema —it was the same barrack in which, with a diabolical sense of humour, the commandant arranged for all executions to take place.

On arrival at the camp the new prisoner was deprived of his civilian clothes and all personal belongings. He was issued with a pair of under-pants, cotton trousers and jacket and boots with wooden soles. On their striped jackets prisoners wore coloured markings to indicate the group to which they were attached and underneath them their prison number. (In many camps numbers were tattooed into the forearms of men and women alike.) Princes among the prisoners, most frequently selected by the S.S. for functions in the internal camp administration and, as camp and block leaders, put in charge of prisoners, were habitual criminals who were adorned by a green triangle on their jackets. The Jews were distinguished by a yellow reversed double triangle—to imitate the star of David—but there were variations, such as in the case of a Jewish criminal who was marked with a green triangle in reverse over his yellow one. Violet triangles for Bible students, brown ones for homosexuals and pink for gipsies were other markings. The so-called "Asocials" (allegedly work-shy men or women) displayed black triangles, the political prisoners in punishment companies a big black dot under their dark-red triangles. Prisoners classified under more than one category wore a combination of markings.

With the assistance of the American authorities, Eugen Kogon, a Bavarian Catholic journalist who was sent to Buchenwald in 1938 and was lucky to survive until liberated by the allied armies, has written an authoritative account of the system of concentration camps[1] in which, with the typical restraint of a man who has been under the shadow of death for seven years, he describes the *via dolorosa* of hundreds of thousands of Nazi prisoners. From the

[1] *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, by Eugen Kogon (Secker & Warburg, London).

pages of his book, which should be read by allied officials who are being pressed to accept former S.S. men in a new German Wehrmacht, emerges a truly moving, heartbreaking picture of calculated humiliation, torture and murder.

Concentration camps, terror and extermination have, in the meantime, become bywords of Nazism. I could hardly believe my eyes when I came across a newspaper cutting reporting a speech by Heinrich Himmler in Munich, 1933: "Protective Custody," he said from the platform, "is an act of care. If I have taken such measures in a rather extensive manner," he added, "I have been misunderstood in many places!" The foreign Press was already explaining to a shocked world what was happening inside Germany, and Himmler, in a crude attempt to silence those spreading "atrocity stories," as he called them, threatened to make his prisoners suffer for what was said abroad. "You must understand," he told his listeners in Munich, "that there was justifiable excitement, annoyance and hostility against those who opposed us. Only by taking them under protective custody was I able to save the personalities who have caused this annoyance. Only in that way was I able to guarantee their security of health and life. But let me say right here," he continued, with a reference to the thousands of Jews who had been imprisoned by his S.S. men, "for us the Jews are as much citizens as those of non-Jewish faith. Their lives and property are equally protected. Protective custody where it concerns Jews must be understood in this spirit."

Only a week later there were rumours abroad, circulated by Heydrich, that an attempt had been made on Hitler's life. Himmler rather gave the show away when, even before the people of Germany were aware of the reports, he delivered another speech: "Let me say right here," he shouted with an unusual display of emotion, "if an attempt should be made on the life of the Fuehrer it would result in the greatest *pogrom* ever. I could not prevent the mass murders which would be the inevitable consequence." At once he ordered an expansion of the S.S. unit under Sepp Dietrich, which protected Hitler. It was named the *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* (Adolf Hitler Bodyguard), a title chosen by Hitler personally. They were issued with special insignia, the inscription "Adolf Hitler" on a black ribbon on their arms. The unit became known by the initials L.A.H. and was elevated even above the lofty peaks of the supra-legal position in the Reich which the S.S. began to arrogate to themselves. No law or restriction was to hamper the *Leibstandarte's* sole duty of safeguarding Adolf Hitler. At once they could be seen, heavily armed in open lorries, roaring through the streets which Hitler was about to pass in public procession, shooting into any window which had remained open on the route contrary to standing orders of the police. Each member of the L.A.H. was

over six feet tall; only light, blond hair qualified S.S. men for acceptance in its ranks. L.A.H. officers enjoyed greater personal power and privileges than any other Nazi functionary. They were the new princes of the Nazi Reich.

Himmler, cleverly playing on Hitler's vanity and fears, constantly urged the simple Sepp Dietrich to enhance the prestige of the bodyguard in Hitler's eyes. He calculated correctly that it would, at the same time, enable him to raise the authority of the whole S.S. accordingly. Profuse in his protestations of loyalty to Hitler, he asserted publicly that "we men of the S.S. are always ready to sacrifice our own blood in the interests of Fuehrer and Fatherland," but could not resist adding at once ". . . and the blood of others, too!" Shedding some of his inhibitions and reticence, Himmler was now eager to show himself in public and to contribute to the cascade of words which poured from the lips of Germany's new rulers. On a tour of inspection he revealed what was in his mind when he jubilantly told his listeners that "the Nazi victory in Germany had inaugurated an era which will last twenty thousand, perhaps thirty thousand, years." For one who drew his inspiration from the Egyptian mummies with blond hair, thirty thousand years was not an extravagant span of time.

Himmler was not yet thirty-three years old, Heydrich only in the late twenties, and the growing influence of the S.S. sometimes intoxicated these two young men. With time on their side, there seemed no limits to which they might not be carried on the strong shoulders of their S.S. men. But both felt sometimes as if the great Nazi wave, on the crest of which Hitler, Goering, Hess, Goebbels were riding in Berlin, was by-passing the Munich branch. Himmler's eyes were on Berlin. There Daluege made good use of his appointment as a high officer in the Prussian police. One by one he called his own S.S. friends into police headquarters and persuaded Goering to appoint them to key positions. With some of the permanent civil servants of the police he established close personal relations and slowly installed himself in an unassailable position. Among the men whom he could now call friends were Heinrich Mueller and Arthur Nebe. Mueller had been a leading political expert in the pre-Hitler Prussian State Police, but put himself unreservedly at the disposal of Goering's Gestapo; Nebe's resort was the Kripo (the Criminal Police), in which his long experience had made him indispensable.

Daluege had gone to great length to gain the confidence of Mueller, although this Prussian police officer had never shown any sympathies for the struggling Nazi Party. Mueller's golden calf, at the feet of which he worshipped, was the authoritarian State idea. Only one yardstick, he was convinced, should be applied to every problem with which he had to deal. The "interest of the State" was his paramount criterion—the individual a negligible quantity

and an insignificant little stone in the great mosaic which formed the State. In the Nazi leaders he was bound to find support for his ideas, and he, in turn, was prepared to support them without reservation. Nebe, who was to play a horrible rôle in the darkest chapter of Nazi history, was a recognized authority on criminology. He was also a shameless opportunist. Early in 1932, when German civil servants were still barred from membership of political parties, he had secretly and under an assumed name enrolled in a small branch of the Nazi Party in whose rising star he believed. His membership card became a passport to rapid promotion as soon as Hitler came to power. Both Nebe and Mueller were jockeying for position, sometimes in internal opposition, sometimes in co-operation with Rudolf Diels, a young confidant of Hermann Goering, and the State Police expert on communism.

Goering's Prussian police, in fact, was a hot-bed of intrigue, of conflicting loyalties, of struggles between "Goering's men" and the S.A., the S.A. and the S.S., in which personal relations, ambitions and policies played a large part. Daluege faithfully reported developments and trends to Munich, where Heinrich Himmler was waiting for an opportunity to step into the Berlin arena. From intrigues Daluege's men soon moved into action. One of his officers, S.S. Stürmfuehrer (Captain) Pakebusch, gained the impression that Rudolf Diels was trying to restrict the influence of the S.S. in the organization. Without much ado he decided to investigate the apartment of Goering's friend, who had, in the meantime, been appointed Chief of the Gestapo. Diels himself tells a story[1], characteristic of conditions at the time, how Pakebusch raided his flat "by order of Daluege," now chief of another branch, the Prussian *Ordnungs-Polizei* (Order Police). Armed with pistols and hand-grenades, Pakebusch and his men searched Diels's private papers and correspondence, and when Diels, called in by his wife, hurried to the scene, threatened him with arrest. Diels had taken the precaution of bringing his own bodyguards. He called on a squad of officers of his department, who quickly put Pakebusch and his *aides* under lock and key.

To Himmler the incident presented a useful pretext for a hurried flight to Berlin. In a heated discussion with Goering he demanded that his S.S. men should be immediately released and Diels severely punished. Goering was not anxious to enter into a dispute with the S.S. leader. With his time-tested diplomacy, he arranged a reconciliation of the warring parties. From the ensuing conference Rudolf Diels emerged with the honorary rank of an S.S. captain. The S.S. had secured a foothold in yet another department of Goering's police. Diels now had a stake in both camps. Already there were signs that the S.A. leadership moved along a political

[1] *Lucifer ante Portas*, by Rudolf Diels (Interverlag, Zürich).

course which did not run parallel with Hitler's lines of thought. S.A. leaders in the country, fanatically devoted to Ernst Roehm, who opposed Hitler's co-operation with the generals, were already regarded with suspicion by Hitler and Goering. If a conflict or even a split between Hitler and the S.A. should ensue there was never any question which side Himmler and his S.S. men would take. A decline of S.A. power alone could produce a breach in the ranks of the Party which only the S.S. could fill. It was what Himmler and Heydrich had been waiting for to put their Black Guards finally and exclusively on the Nazi map.

Hitler was not yet prepared to allow the Reichsfuehrer to transfer his activities to Berlin, where Goering could regard him as a competitor. But, in recognition of Himmler's success as a Police President of Munich, in acknowledgement of the incomparable security measures which the S.S. had taken in Bavaria, in gratitude for the good work which Heydrich's political espionage organization of the S.D. was performing in South Germany, Hitler opened the doors for a spectacular and rapid expansion of Himmler's powers and authority. From October, 1933, onwards the German Press began to announce the stepping-stones of Himmler's rise with monotonous regularity: 27 October, Himmler Chief of Political Police in Mecklenburg and Lübeck; 20 December, Himmler Chief of the Political Police in Baden; 21 December, Himmler Chief of the Political Police in Hesse and Anhalt; 24 December, Himmler Chief of the Political Police in Bremen. The headlines screamed; the German people, who were beginning to get acquainted with Himmler's methods, trembled. Ernst Roehm and the S.A. recognized the writing on the wall. Other appointments soon followed: Thuringia, Saxonia, Hamburg, Württemberg. Within a few months Himmler had become Chief of Police in every province of Germany except Prussia, where Goering clung to his job.

Ernst Roehm did not admit defeat and the time had not come when Hitler sought an open conflict. To pacify the S.A. Chief of Staff and to smother his protests against Himmler's promotion, Hitler offered him an undefined post in the Government, "to insure," said the decree, "closer co-operation of the offices of . . . the S.A. with the public authorities." Himmler, in the hierarchy of party and government, remained technically a junior under the authority of Dr. Wilhelm Frick, Reichsminister of the Interior. He never used the title, newly conferred on him, of Under-Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior, because it was embarrassing for the Reichsfuehrer S.S. to admit that he was "under" anybody but Hitler.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GROWTH OF THE S.S.

NEW appointments and increased emoluments enabled Himmler to change his mode of living. He had no extravagant tastes and any idea of personal luxury was repugnant to the man who always regarded himself as a soldier and a Germanic figure, faithful to the memory of his ancestors who used to sleep on bearskins. But he moved into a big, elegantly furnished new flat in Munich, near Hitler's personal residence in the Prinz Regentenplatz. He sold his Trudering chicken farm and acquired Lindenfycht, a house in Gmünd on the famous Tegernsee, into which he moved his wife, daughter, and a boy whom he had recently adopted. But he found little time to enjoy the attractive surroundings. Accompanied by Heydrich, who rarely allowed his chief to slip from his presence for long, and Karl Wolff, his A.D.C. whom he had promoted to the rank of an S.S. colonel, he went on a tour of his new commands. In hurried conferences he reorganized the structure of one police force after another, replacing many S.A. officials with trusted S.S. officers.

The most important feature of these reorganizations was the induction of Heydrich's Security Service—S.D.—officers into the police organizations. Gestapo departments which were functioning everywhere on Goering's Prussian model were staffed with experienced S.D. men. The sinister civilian long arm of the S.S. embraced the German police with a firm grip. The S.D. and Gestapo twins began to take on an independent life and to stake their claim for the undisputed control of every man, woman and child in the country. The big ears of the S.D. were always open and listened intently to every whisper. On S.D. reports the Gestapo acted. From the S.D., via the Gestapo, the road led straight to the S.S. Death Head brigades and their concentration camps. Almost imperceptibly the S.S. assumed a unique position in the Reich. By March, 1934, Himmler's net covered the whole of Germany and he asked for an interview with his Fuehrer to tell him about the extent of his measures to protect the régime against all opposition.

It was a dramatic and portentous meeting. Humbly, but with pointed emphasis, Himmler was able to explain that his S.S. men were not only firmly in the saddle in the German provinces in

which he was now Police Chief, but that they were already carrying the major burden of the administration in Goering's Prussian Police. There had been clashes and conflicts, he explained, responsibilities were overlapping, loyalties were divided and Goering cliques were opposing S.S. groups instead of concentrating on the struggle against the "internal enemy." It might be useful if the process of centralization of the Reich administration, one of the Nazi Government's early aims, could at once be extended to the police. In short, Himmler was politely but definitely suggesting that the Prussian Gestapo should no longer be left outside his orbit. There is no record—because there were no eye-witnesses—of the consultations between Hitler and Goering which followed Himmler's assault on the island of the Prussian Gestapo in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse in Berlin. Hitler, it emerged later, had pointed out to Goering that tasks of greater importance awaited him, that it was not the job of a cabinet minister to run personally a small department of the police. He made a concession to Goering's pride by suggesting that he should retain the title of a Chief of the Prussian Secret State Police, while Himmler and his staff would do the work. While Goering's appointees in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse tried desperately hard to retain their old chief — and their jobs (from which, they knew, Himmler would soon remove them), Goering accepted the compromise.

In the middle of March he took the Gestapo officials into his confidence. Himmler, he told them, would be their chief executive—but he, Goering, would retain control. On 10 April he called a conference of the whole staff to introduce them to the Reichsfuehrer of the S.S. Behind Himmler stood the tall, blond Heydrich, a glint of triumph in his eyes. Goering made a short speech. It would be for Herr Himmler, he said, to inaugurate strong measures for a final blow against all enemies of the State. Reichsfuehrer Himmler's experience would be a guarantee that their days were numbered. Every official was in duty bound to stand full square behind the new Chief of the German Police. To stand behind Himmler, it soon became clear, meant also to stand together. With Heydrich's S.D. men in every department, their identity and secret job unknown, private conversation became a hazard, every wrong word a source of danger. There was no more room for intrigues, special interests and personal ambitions. Those who could not be relied upon to remain in line were ruthlessly eliminated from the service. As his closest friends had predicted, the tremendous change which had come over the Gestapo with the advent of Himmler and Heydrich did not even leave Goering's friends unaffected. S.D. officers quickly produced evidence to show that Rudolf Diels had not been single-minded in his position as Gestapo Chief. Goering, who had often been irritated by Diels's intrigues, agreed to remove

him from the job. On 20 April the portentous announcement was made: Heinrich Himmler, Deputy Chief of the Secret State Police in Prussia. Automatically, Heydrich, as in all other provinces, established himself as virtual Chief of the Security Police and the Security Service. At the same time, because (said the announcement) it had given new proof of its necessity and reliability, the S.S. was finally removed from the authority of the S.A. and declared an independent, sovereign organization of the Party directly responsible to Hitler.

"Absolute negation of all personal purposes," explained Guenther d'Alquen, the faithful chronicler of the S.S., "and recognition of the worthlessness of sectional interests invested the S.S. with the right to become the Protective Corps of State and Party, the strong arm of the Fuehrer for the internal security of the Reich in good times and bad. Strongest discipline, self-assurance as a result of a process of continual elimination from its ranks (of all those below the highest racial standards) . . . are the developments which explain the tasks of the S.S." If Goering, at the last moment, had become aware that he was abandoning an incomparable instrument of power to a Party comrade who was animated by very different notions from his own, he was pleased to receive from Himmler an unqualified assurance of personal loyalty. Himmler once more loudly protested his voluntary subordination to higher authority — Goering's—while avidly assuming practical control. He had a great capacity for humbling himself for a very good and useful purpose. In an emotional speech he professed his gratitude to fate ("My destiny," he called it) for guiding his steps to ever-higher spheres, but prostrated himself before Goering: "My honour is loyalty!" he said, wiping tears from his spectacles. "I shall for ever remain loyal to you. Never," he added with unconscious significance, "will you have anything to fear from me."

His official subservience, however, was in strong contrast with the feeling of elation and achievement, with the smug self-confidence which went with his elevation to a position of supreme importance in the State. At once he began to adapt his life to the new circumstances. For a long time he had, as he complained to his associates, spent most nights travelling, virtually lived in a sleeper and "out of a suitcase." He had practically no home life, for there was little time now for quiet week-ends at Lindenfycht. His new post in Prussia made the long-contemplated move to Berlin necessary. Karl Wolff, his adjutant, went house-hunting and found a villa in the fashionable Dahlem suburb of Berlin as a suitable foil for his chief. Himmler soon moved into this villa, "Am Dohnenstag," not far from the luxurious home of wealthy Joachim von Ribbentrop, and houses occupied by other dignitaries of the Nazi régime. Heinrich Himmler had become a member of the Nazi hierarchy, although he

still ranked well below such leaders as Hess, Goering, Goebbels, Rosenberg, Frank—and many more. But even in Nazi circles the mounting influence of the political police had become a regular topic of conversation. Now that the prim, inflexible, colourless, but at the same time impenetrable Himmler was in charge, the police became a still more remote, undefinable, incalculable factor in the lives of German people—Nazis included.

Himmler installed himself in the palace in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse into which Rudolf Diels had moved the Gestapo. Reinhard Heydrich was allocated a separate block of offices in the Wilhelmstrasse 102, where he began to concentrate the administration of the S.D., the Security Service. A park connected the two buildings, through which it was possible to commute between Gestapo and the S.D. *Hauptamt* (Main Office), as it became known later. Heydrich furnished a private office for his chief in his *Hauptamt,* to which Himmler often retired to remain undisturbed by visitors and inaccessible to all except his personal staff. He now worked fourteen hours per day, longer hours than most other Nazi leaders—with the possible exception of Adolf Hitler. The year was 1934 and Himmler's colleagues in the Government were still busy tasting the sweet fruits of public office, taking part in long rounds of official receptions, appearing in public at every opportunity and making speeches. Himmler remained glued to his desk. In long conversations with Heydrich he had become convinced that he could only adequately perform his duties of a police chief if he kept himself aloof even from loyal and proved members and leaders of the Party. Heydrich had long sacrificed all friendships on the altar of his ambitions. It suited his purpose to see Himmler residing on a carefully guarded peak of loneliness on which he alone was able to join him.

The few people who met Himmler at his office often saw him, elbows on his desk, hands at his head, as he was lost in concentration over files and documents. His short, stout fingers seemed to hold his skull in an iron grip. Karl Wolff watched him and soon realized that Himmler was in great pain. But only to his brother, Gebhard, did he admit at the time that the pressure of thoughts, the power of concentration made his head feel like a ball of fire. "It is as if every nerve in my head is leading a separate existence and anxious to torment me," Himmler said to his brother. Himmler had suffered quietly for many months before Wolff summoned enough courage to raise the delicate subject of his condition. He knew that Himmler had an aversion to orthodox doctors. "Let nature take its course," he used to say. But nature was rather hard on him just then. Thousands of hapless prisoners in concentration camps and police cells, the multitude of their friends and relatives, wished every misfortune on Himmler, their tormentor. They did

not know that God was granting their wish. Wolff, at long last, persuaded him to entrust himself to a reliable masseur, a nature healer by the name of Franz Setzkorn, who might succeed in relieving pain and pressure with the magnetism of his hands alone. Setzkorn was called in and almost every day Himmler submitted himself to his treatment, relaxing in his chair while the masseur's hands ranged over the short, round skull of the Chief of the Secret Police.

The problems which faced him were big enough to give a headache to a stronger, healthier man. Long before he was officially informed that a dramatic split was threatening the very foundations of the Nazi Party, Heydrich, on the strength of information supplied by his all-present S.D. spies, gave him a hint of what was afoot. In 1932 Gregor Strasser had opposed Hitler's leanings towards German heavy industry and what Strasser called "his betrayal of the Party to the money-bags." Now a new struggle was raging inside the Party. Adolf Hitler, the Fuehrer, the Chancellor of the German Reich, was ranged against Ernest Roehm and the S.A. To Roehm the issue seemed fundamental and decisive for the future of Germany. To Roehm it had always appeared as a logical consequence of Hitler's "assumption of power" in the Reich, that the militant formation of the party, the S.A. Brown Shirts, should become the dominant and finally the exclusive army in the State. The Reichswehr, Roehm knew from his own experience as a regular officer, had a habit of leading an independent political life—obviously incompatible with the Nazi Government's claim of totality. The S.A. should replace the Reichswehr.

To his dismay he found Hitler not at all anxious to challenge the Reichswehr generals at a time when the Nazi Government by no means enjoyed universal support in the country. Why not accept the powerful generals as allies, why not make common cause with them, why not, it occurred to Hitler, wait until he was strong enough to deal with them in his own fashion? Roehm and his friends were dangerously irreverent and independent anyway. The wealthy backers of the Nazi Party were constantly at Hitler's ear with complaints against "the brown rabble." The Reichswehr generals were impatient with Roehm's insidious propaganda and many carefully planned provocations emanating from the S.A. camp. While there is no evidence that Hitler had encouraged Himmler's S.S. to grow and expand with a view to using them against the S.A. mother organization, the very strength to which the Black Guards had developed under Himmler and Heydrich enabled him to make the inevitable choice between S.A. and Army.

The story of the bloodbath in which Hitler ordered most of his oldest friends to be murdered, and in which on 30 June, 1934, the S.A. was eventually drowned, has often been told. In the conversa-

tions between Hitler, Goering and the generals which preceded the purge Himmler had no part. The decision had been taken, dates, details and personalities were already under discussion when Hitler took the Reichsfuehrer of the S.S. into his confidence. Hitler told him that Ernst Roehm and other S.A. leaders would have to be eliminated. Heydrich, they knew, was leaning towards the Army; anyway, his hatred of the S.A. was even fiercer than Goering's. Himmler went on a tour of inspection of vital S.S. sectors in the country, conferring with the leaders, addressing to the rank and file his usual stereotyped exhortations to loyalty to the Fuehrer "under all circumstances." But only a small number of selected members of Heydrich's S.D. were told what was afoot. They were handed lists of disloyal S.A. leaders in their districts on whom they were asked to keep an eye. To give Heydrich's men a better official standing, Hitler, on 6 June, issued a decree which made the S.D. the sole Intelligence agency of the Party. A secret directive made it obligatory for the highest leaders and their organizations, for every Nazi official in a government department, to furnish S.D. officers with all information required. In co-operation with Hermann Goering, Heydrich compiled lists of "dangerous" S.A. officers. The whole resources of the Gestapo, in which Himmler now held a high administrative rank, the Kripo (Criminal Police) under Nebe, and Daluege's Order Police were mobilized to keep the S.A. leadership under close observation. The strategy of the *coup* was devised by Hermann Goering; tactics were designed by Heydrich.

On 20 June, 1934, Himmler was ordered to see Hitler at the Chancellery to receive his final instructions. The two men were closeted in deep private conversation for an hour before they left the Chancellery together, Hitler with a gesture of his hand asking Himmler to join him in his big Mercédès motor-car. They were driving to the Schorfheide, Goering's estate north of Berlin to which he had brought the body of his late wife, Karin, from Sweden to be re-interred in the grounds of the park. Arriving at Schorfheide, Hitler, still in the car, was greeted by a young girl, who was about to hand him a large bunch of roses when a shot rang out. Himmler screamed in anguish. A bullet, obviously aimed at Hitler, had hit Himmler in the arm. The shot was fired from close-quarters and the would-be assassin, though mysteriously he was never caught, could only have been a member of Goering's S.A. Guard. Next day this guard was replaced by an S.S. detachment. The wounded Himmler, his face glowing, turned to Hitler: "How grateful I am to destiny, *mein Fuehrer*," he said, "that I was allowed to spill my blood to save your life!" From now on Himmler regarded himself as Hitler's "blood" brother.

If there had still been any question about the action against the S.A., the shots on the Schorfheide provided the answer. Hitler,

Himmler's parents, Gebhard and Anna Himmler, in their Munich home (1935).

Heinrich Himmler (*left*) and his elder brother Gebhard, in military uniform during the First World War.

Heinrich Himmler and Hermann Goering on their way to the Reichstag building (September, 1932).

under the personal protection of Sepp Dietrich and the *Leibstandarte*, decided to lead the purge and strike at Ernst Roehm. On 30 June, 1934, the signal was given with Hitler's air trip south, where he personally arrested Roehm and his friends at Roehm's villa in Wiessee and ordered them to be shot. An S.D. detachment caught Berlin's S.A. leader, Karl Ernst, who was about to embark on a timely holiday cruise, and killed him. In every part of Germany the S.S. went into action against the S.A. S.S. men went about their job with joyous ferocity—the simmering rivalry between the two armed formations of the Party broke out in fearful violence. While Goering directed the arrests and checked the lists, Heinrich Himmler, with Heydrich, went to Lichterfelde barracks in Berlin, headquarters of the permanent S.S., to supervise the executions. From the cellars of the barracks arrested S.A. leaders were brought up to the court-yard in groups and put against the wall. Crack shots mowed them down until even some of the hardened executioners found the strain too great and collapsed. Coolly Himmler moved about behind them, exhorting those who threatened to lose their nerve, making mental notes of the "weaklings" who, in his eyes, had proved themselves unequal to their duty as S.S. soldiers.

The result of the purge is known. Among the four-thousand-odd prominent persons murdered in cold blood was Gregor Strasser, Himmler's earliest friend and protector in the Party. While Hitler wept hysterically at the thought of his old friends whom he had committed to death, Himmler dispassionately assessed the political and personal repercussions of the massacre. The complete elimination of the S.A. leadership and the reduction of the S.A. to insignificance cleared the path to power for the S.S. and for Heinrich Himmler. The short and gruesome history of the S.S. really begins on 30 June, 1934. The world shuddered at the blood that had been spilt. Himmler found consolation in history—or at least in one suitable Teutonic legend. Yes, he told his *aides*, it was a bloodbath —and let nobody be mealy-mouthed about it. The S.A. dragon had been destroyed. Like Siegfried, the S.S. man had had his bath in blood; like Siegfried, the S.S. man would emerge from it invulnerable. Himmler was not aware, however, that, as also happened to Siegfried in the saga, there still remained a vulnerable spot which a dagger or a sword would find one day.

This, then, was the hour of Himmler's great triumph; here was his opportunity. But the great moment found him, as usual, hesitant, doubtful, undecided. There are bosses whom opportunity galvanizes into action, who will summon their subordinates to their room to issue their orders. Himmler, characteristically, belonged to the category of men who, on such occasions, are overwhelmed by the loneliness of their office, overawed by their own staff. Whenever a great decision was to be made Himmler could be found in

Heydrich's room. And Heydrich could be relied upon, cunningly, insidiously to work on his chief, soothing his nerves with one sentence, rousing his fears with the next, raising hopes, issuing warnings, spinning a web of words in which Himmler was caught, hopelessly, inescapably, dependent on Heydrich. As always during Himmler's rise to power, events and developments determined the direction in which he travelled. Always he was at least one step behind them. Exhausted, racked by pains in his head, tortured by stomach cramps which ever more frequently accompanied strain and excitement, Heinrich Himmler clamoured for Setzkorn, the masseur. But while Setzkorn kneaded his head and stomach, Heydrich was at his side to mould his mind and to unfold new urgent problems for the attention of the Reichsfuehrer. He also, readily, suggested the solutions of the problems.

Now was the time to give impetus to the S.S. organization. For many months, while the overworked Race Office conducted investigations into the antecedents of recruits and tried to cope with thousands of requests, no new applications had been accepted. Now Heydrich suggested another recruitment drive to swell the ranks of the S.S. It numbered just over fifty thousand men, with a hard core of professionals, the so-called *Verfuegungstruppe* (Action Troops), housed in the S.S. own barracks. They served in the *Leibstandarte*, and in two newly formed regiments: "Deutschland" in Munich, and "Germania" stationed in Hamburg. All over Germany people looked up in awe and with fear at the sign of the S.S., two short streaks of lightning — not, as even Germans erroneously assumed, signifying a double "S," the initials of *Schutz Staffeln*, but the old Germanic runes which Himmler had chosen because they stand for *Sieg*—Victory. Military organization, with the help of many ex-Army officer recruits to the S.S., went smoothly. Heydrich was intent on further expanding the administration. In consultations with Himmler, into which he soon called lawyers, doctors, administrators and officials from every walk of life, he laid the foundation for the S.S. empire of the future.

There was Heydrich dinning into his ears—new recruits, more weapons, new training schedules, wider authority in Party matters! Ideas poured from the young man's fertile mind, but Himmler saw danger and difficulties everywhere. The Nazi Party was like a big firm with department chiefs anxiously guarding their spheres of competence against encroachment from their colleagues. Careful, cautious, slow, was Himmler's method, but because he could neither explain nor defend it in his interminable conversations with Heydrich he adopted and developed a technique of evasion—until evasion became part of his mental make-up and he began to evade issues by habit and for no urgent reason at all. He became incapable of giving a clear-cut, decisive answer, and, afraid of questions, would

awkwardly raise extraneous, harmless topics in conversation. It was one of the reasons why his more active, self-assured fellow-leaders in the Party avoided personal contact with him whenever possible. Himmler became lonelier than he had ever been. And when even Heydrich's tender calls to action became unbearable he withdrew completely and took refuge in the study of history. Heydrich left him alone for a while in the hope that he would emerge at long last with decisions. He emerged with a plan which, members of his entourage told me, really made Heydrich weep. Money? Weapons? New branches? Better experts? No! Himmler had decided to buy —a burgh! Waving away Heydrich and his assembled arms experts, administrators and lawyers, Himmler explained to his staff that the conception of the S.S. as a Holy Order was not completely implemented as long as there was not a centre, a burgh such as, for instance, the Marienburg from which the Teutonic Knights had drawn their inspiration and had set out on their missions of colonization. There would have to be a headquarters, far removed from the materialistic, political atmosphere of Berlin, from which the S.S., spiritually and physically, could sally forth on its historic mission. It was to be a burgh for the highest S.S. leadership, a venue of assembly, a refuge for secret consultation and quiet meditation in the right atmosphere.

Treating his listeners to long recitals from the pages of his books, he drew their attention to passages containing an old Germanic prophecy, according to which "there would threaten from the East a gigantic storm which might overwhelm the country if it was not brought to a halt at the Birkenwald in Westphalia." There, in Westphalia, the S.S. burgh, the fortress of German civilization, the rock to stand firm against eastern hordes—in the spirit of the prophecy —the Burgh of the Holy Order of the S.S. would have to be established. The Westphalian S.S. was ordered to look for a suitable location. He instructed the Main Office to organize a collection for the huge funds necessary to create the castle of his dream. No money was to be spared to bring into being this symbol of modern Teutonic greatness. An architect, Bartels, was instructed to prepare elaborate plans. From the day on which he made his decision Himmler became inaccessible to anybody not directly concerned with his project. For weeks his staff had difficulty in getting him to attend to the most urgent business, and only reluctantly he allowed Heydrich, Daluege and Wolff to acquaint him with details of the day-to-day affairs of the S.S. And when, during one of these conferences, news came from the Government President of Westphalia that his search had been rewarded by the discovery of a "sign," Himmler was overjoyed. Near Paderborn, it appeared, there were the ruined foundations of what must have been a medieval burgh—exactly in the spot which the old prophecy seemed to in-

dicate. Himmler abruptly left his *aides*, boarded a plane to inspect the locality. He was solemn, as if in prayer, as he stood by the thick forest where, in his mind's eye, he could already see his burgh rising majestically from the ruins.

Eleven million marks were earmarked for the project. For weeks Himmler and Bartels sat in complete seclusion to discuss every detail of the plan. When, after a year's work, the Wewelsburg, as Himmler called it, was completed it was a unique reconstruction of a medieval castle, yet built to realize the image in his mind. Every room was furnished in a different style—not even a single desk was duplicated. Only leading craftsmen of every branch had been employed to produce fine tapestries, solid oak furniture, wrought-iron door-handles, candlesticks. Priceless carpets were acquired, curtains of heavy brocade flanked the high windows. Doors were carved and embellished with precious metals and stones. Built in the old Germanic style on a triangular foundation, the burgh's towers rose high over the trees. As he walked from room to room, when the burgh was completed, Himmler was able to review, as in a museum, symbolically the whole history of the German Reich. Every room, so to speak, represented an important theme, a phase, personified often by the oustanding personality of the period to which it was devoted. There was a room for Heinrich der Loewe, another for Frederick the Great. Darre's *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil) idea had a shrine, so had the Teutonic conception of *Feme und Recht* (Revenge and Right). Heinrich I, of course, and his spirit were represented by the most magnificent room—and Himmler chose it for himself.

Eventually the Reichsfuehrer arranged for the highest S.S. leaders to meet three or four times a year at the Wewelsburg, here in the hallowed atmosphere, to deliberate and discuss the policy of the S.S. He ordered that each S.S. leader should be allocated a different room on every new occasion. Retiring after the conferences, the S.S. dignitaries would find on their tables genuine old books and parchments, in the cupboards a whole literature dealing with the period to which the room had been designed, about the personality who had left his imprint on these times. From museums and private collections Himmler had acquired genuine period-pieces—swords and armour, jewels, crowns, garments which had belonged to his heroes. They surrounded the S.S. leaders, who were forced to live for a few days in the past of Germany's history and encouraged to steep themselves in the spirit which filled their room. Moving, as the years and conferences went on, from one room to another, S.S. leaders could thus gradually acquaint themselves from unimpeachable sources with the details of the historic trends which guided their leader. Only Karl Wolff, who was supposed to know all about it, was allowed to remain in the same room. The others were led

on a permanent merry-go-round until their S.S. education was completed. Many of them, as time went on, saturated and bored with all this historic nonsense, brought detective novels and love stories to read of an evening, hoping that the Reichsfuehrer next morning would not involve them in a conversation about the subject of the room in which they had spent the night.

Heydrich in Berlin, in the meantime, occupied himself with questions of greater urgency. Living in the present and looking into the future while his chief happily delved into the past, he had initiated a campaign to harass the Austrian Government under the Catholic Chancellor, Dr. Dollfuss, and to force it into the arms of Germany. With funds provided by German industrialists, assisted by agents of the Security Service, the Austrian Nazis had launched a wave of terror designed to terrify the Austrian Government into surrender of its sovereignty. Bombs exploded in trains and crowded stores in Vienna, noisy and violent demonstrations were organized, culminating on 25 July, 1934, in the murder of Chancellor Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss. The agents of German National Socialism were small units of illegal Austrian S.S. bands, on the pattern of the German units, armed with S.S. weapons from Germany. When the Austrian police swooped on these revolutionaries and, to give them a dose of their own Nazi medicine, interned the leaders in a concentration camp, one of their prisoners was Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, a provincial lawyer who had acted under direct orders from Heydrich. Kaltenbrunner at once organized a hunger strike among his fellow prisoners and was released after a short period of detention. Triumphantly he sent a telegram to Heydrich, who could not know that, less than ten years later, Kaltenbrunner was to succeed him in his post as Chief of the Security Police and the Security Service of Germany.

The failure of the Austrian putsch was a serious setback for the S.S. at a time when it seemed to have conquered all obstacles inside Germany. Fierce international reaction to the brutal murder of Austria's Chancellor combined with internal protests against Heydrich's crude attempts to export his particular brand of violence. It led to acrimonious controversy between Himmler and Goering, who had devised a diplomatic strategy to isolate Austria and to win over the Balkan countries as allies of Germany. Goering now blamed Himmler for the collapse of this policy and for the new storm of indignation which broke over the Third Reich. S.S. leaders today admit that, possibly, Heydrich was anxious to steal a march on Goering with his attempt to cut the Gordian knot which diplomacy was about to unravel with all too traditional, slow and subtle methods. Himmler defended his loyal *aide*, but the conflict resulted in a breach between Goering and the S.S. which was never bridged. Hitler could not readily forgive his lieutenants when they did not

produce results and a shadow descended on Himmler and the S.S. It embittered Himmler to be thus halted on the threshold of personal success, but his fury was not directed against the Fuehrer, who temporarily withdrew his support—that would have verged on blasphemy. He unleashed it against "the traditional enemies of Germany—reactionaries, the Catholics, the Jews above all." He began to see them lurking everywhere. In an address to police functionaries he reminded the protectors of German security that "millions have joined us with an honest heart, but tens of thousands have remained our enemies. Let us not deceive ourselves," he cried. "The enemies of National Socialism are organizing themselves all over the world to fight us with every means at their disposal." The conclusion was that the fight would have to be carried into the camp of the enemy at home and abroad. The world was hardly aware of Himmler's existence when he threw down the gauntlet and ordered the S.S. to mobilize for the battle.

CHAPTER SIX

TRUE ARYAN VERSUS RITUAL MURDER

FOR years Himmler had been campaigning and fulminating against the Church of Rome and the Vatican. But only the clash of the S.S. with the Government of Austria, the determined resistance of the new Catholic Chancellor, Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg, against S.S. violence and the Nazi Party, brought it home to him that, incongruously, he was still theoretically a Roman Catholic. Whenever he pondered the subject he recalled his youth, his confirmation, the family visits to church, confessions and communions, the small religious symbols which graced his parents' home in Munich. His mother, particularly, had remained a devout Catholic. During one of his visits to Munich she openly reproached him for his public attacks on bishops and cardinals, for insults which he even hurled at the venerated figure of Munich's Archbishop Cardinal Faulhaber. "I'll do anything you say, Mother," he said despondently, "but you must not interfere with my political activities." There and then he told her that he had decided to leave the Catholic Church. How could he live in the image of his Teutonic ancestors, he exclaimed, if he remained a member of the Catholic Church?

The family, which had been gratified by Heinrich's political success, was perturbed. Mother dropped ominous hints which, had Himmler been anxious to take them, should have persuaded him that his Germanic ideas were not quite in keeping with his antecedents. Gebhard Himmler is convinced that she tried to convey to her son an inkling of her doubts about her own—and his—pure Aryan descent. "We had our doubts, too," Karl Wolff said to me: "his high cheekbones, certain traits in his character . . . clearly Mongolian. . . . No wonder Major Bergmann, his private race researcher, was the unhappiest, most frustrated and terrified member of his entourage!"

Himmler, who thought of himself as a loyal, faithful family man—did they not call him *treuer Heinrich* (faithful Heinrich)?—assumed his kindest air when in his mother's presence. As usual, as soon as she set eyes on him she produced a list of requests: "Let's see your list!" he often said. The pride in her son's high station was sometimes tinged with wonderment and doubts about the measures his police organization took. In close touch with the

ordinary people among whom she lived, the acute ears of the old lady had heard whispers and complaints, hardly complimentary to her son. Here, a prominent member of the Munich community had been arrested as "an enemy of the State." "How can he be an enemy," Mother asked, "a man who fought for his country in the last war, a deeply religious and charitable man. . . ?" A friend of the family had been removed from his job as a teacher. "Heinrich," his mother asked, "do you know what your officials are doing. . . ?"

With every visit Mother's list grew. "What a kind-hearted man he was," Gebhard Himmler said, long after his brother's death: "he never refused his mother a single wish!" His staff soon realized that the artificial armour of holy principles on which their chief professed to act could be pierced. Ruthless, inflexible, merciless, sometimes idiotically obstinate in the face of indisputable arguments as he usually was, it took, on other occasions, only a word to deflect him from his self-chosen course. He always boasted that he was able to resist any demand, even from the highest quarters, if fulfilment involved a violation of his "principles." On other occasions he would unaccountably reverse his decisions and show "mercy" under the flimsiest of pretexts. But his "acts of mercy" mostly had a curious flavour. Visiting Dachau concentration camp with Karl Wolff in attendance, he insisted, around this time, on inspecting the women's quarters. Marching stiffly along the lines of the female prisoners who had been called out on parade, he loudly sneered at the criminal Jewish features of some of the women, commented in vulgar, provocative terms on the inferior bone structure of others. Then he came to a halt in front of a young woman, a Bible student who had been confined to the camp because she had carried on anti-militarist agitation. "Look, Wolff," he said, "she has blond hair—obviously an Aryan type!" Hurriedly the camp commandant was asked to produce the woman's dossier; she was a Bible student, a pacifist. "I want to talk to her!" Himmler demanded.

Perplexed camp guards dragged the woman to the commandant's office, where Himmler awaited her. "My dear girl," he said mildly, "what a pity that you have strayed from the path. . . . You are obviously an Aryan. Why not give up your strange ideas? I, the Reichsfuehrer, will order your release immediately if you sign a document to say that you have recognized your Aryan heritage. . . ." Looking at the prisoner's index card, he noticed that she was married and the mother of two children. "Blond children, I bet . . ." he said ingratiatingly, while Wolff and the camp guards stood speechless. "Would you not like to see them again. . . ?" The woman stood silent. Slowly she turned her head as tears began to drop from her bright-blue eyes. Himmler waited. There was no response. "Take her away!" he ordered. Fuming, he reproached the camp commandant because his efforts of re-education were

obviously insufficient if such specimens were able to resist them. And with an afterthought he said: "Because this woman has all the advantages of her race, she is doubly dangerous. Measures will have to be taken against her. . . ." Two hours after he left Dachau the unfortunate blonde girl, whose only crime was to have attracted the attention of a merciful Himmler, was executed "for a grave violation of the camp rules."

He could be merciful though. He was driving along the road from Munich to the Tegernsee at the wheel of his own small car when a motorist impeded his progress. Hooting his horn, the Reichsfuehrer tried to pass the car in front—without avail. At last he succeeded in overtaking him, and cut in sharply to bring his car to a halt. With an undignified show of temper, Himmler jumped from his seat and lurched at the unfortunate driver, who only slowly realized that he was facing the Chief of the Gestapo. "How dare you drive so as to be a danger and obstruction to other motorists?" Himmler shouted. "Your name and address!" With a typical gesture of a policeman on traffic duty, he produced a little notebook and a pen. "You will be severely punished!" The hapless offender's apologies were almost inaudible. Himmler, looking up from his notebook, observed children in the rear of the car, two blonde girls, three, four. . . . "Your daughters?" he asked with a change of tone. "Beautiful Germanic children. . . ." The harassed father beckoned the four girls to present themselves to Himmler. With the customary German curtsey, the children greeted the Reichsfuehrer, who looked at them pleasurably. "Well, since you are the father of four fine Aryan children . . . I shall forgive you this time." A sweeping gesture of magnanimity—and he tore up his notes, mounted his car and went on his way.

Only in Bavaria, during his short holidays, when he spent a few days in Lindenfycht, did the German people have an opportunity of seeing Himmler the man—as distinct from the stiff, aloof, public figure of the Reichsfuehrer. The inhabitants of Gmünd, on the pleasant lake, not far from Wiessee whence Roehm was carried away to his death, could watch an amiable, relaxed Himmler, dressed somewhat incongruously in Bavarian leather shorts and coloured shirt and sporting a tiny hat of local pattern—the hat which his father had worn and given him and which he kept as a relic until the end. His days were spent driving around the lake in his small B.M.W. (Bayrische Motoren Werke) car, a gift from the firm which had made big profits from large orders for lorries for mechanized S.S. units. He visited his brother Gebhard, whom he had appointed a Standartenfuehrer (equivalent of colonel) in the S.S. Main Office.

The Junker Schools were a favourite topic of conversation between the brothers, and Heinrich used to explain to Gebhard how

he was earmarking the boys for posts in the Nazi administration, in the police and other key positions. The process of infiltration of public life with S.S. men for which Heydrich had been pressing from the beginning was speeded up as more youngsters were passed out from the schools—sometimes long before their training course was completed, and often simply because there was an opening in a position which Himmler and Heydrich wanted to see filled with one of their nominees. Himmler, who had few doubts about his country twenty thousand years hence, was making sure of the Germany of 1935.

He now missed few opportunities of speaking publicly about the S.S. Surrounded by members of the S.S. Leadership Corps, the élite of the S.S. élite, he explained once more how he recruited his men, what he expected of them. "We take our boys from the Hitler Youth at the age of eighteen," he said. "After they have completed a year of labour service they rejoin us as aspirants and are accepted in our ranks at the annual ceremony on 9 November (the anniversary of the 1923 putsch). Demands in the sphere of sport are high . . . but when they reach the age of twenty-five their duties become less arduous so as to enable them to found a family. . . . When their S.S. education is completed with instruction on racial principles they begin to form part of the living wall of strength for the protection of the German people, and are a generation harder than any before them, trained to discipline and obedience."

A hard generation! Emphasis on physical fitness, on sport in which he expected his S.S. men to excel and to outdo all competitors, had become a preoccupation with Himmler which perturbed many of the S.S. dignitaries when they discovered that the Reichsfuehrer expected them to match his youngest recruits in physical prowess. In the officers' corps of the S.S. served many elderly party and State functionaries who had taken the oath because they hoped to benefit from the increasing prestige which went with S.S. membership. Although his *aides* tried to dissuade him, Himmler sought every opportunity of testing the standard of physical fitness of such S.S. officers. Sometimes, with a grave manner, he would organize a "little sport" in the park behind his Berlin office, force his S.S. guests and visitors to try a hundred-metre dash or a long or high jump and compete with each other in athletic games. Panting, sweating, middle-aged functionaries cursed him under their breath as he put them through their paces, watching earnestly and, in turn, applauding or reproving them. Already in the previous year he had ordered that every S.S. man should reach the physical standard required to obtain the so-called *Sportabzeichen* (Sports Badge), a diploma issued by the German Sports Associations for all-round athletic achievements.

Eventually it dawned on him that he himself might be expected

to achieve what he asked his men to do. He was, after all, only thirty-five years of age and, at once, decided to go into training for the official test so as to qualify for the Sports Badge. Workmen were called to transform part of the Wilhelmstrasse-Prinz Albrechtstrasse park into a miniature sports arena. They laid gravel for a racing track, dug a jumping pitch, erected parallel and horizontal bars. Almost every day from now on, while Karl Wolff stood by with stop-watch and tape-measure, Himmler devoted an hour of back-breaking effort to perfect his physical condition. "It was no good," Wolff said after the war, though at the time he encouraged his chief and assured him that a few weeks would be sufficient for him to make the grade. "The Reichsfuehrer was just not built like a sportsman. His arms were short, his hands weak. He displayed much energy and persevered with the strength of despair. At first, in private conversation, he would talk of little else except his training. But as the weeks lengthened into months and the months became one year and the second year of his endeavours still did not bring success, he became very touchy when the subject was raised." Arduously one-tenth of a second was clipped off his time for a hundred metres, then another tenth of a second, and another.

In his intimate circle of adjutants and assistants who witnessed his gruelling practice he would try to reconcile his own unavailing efforts with his insistence on these tests for others: "We have to make a start now with our attempts to raise the physical standard of our race—or we shall never create a Germany in which every citizen is a truly Nordic type. If some of us are not quite up to requirements, the improvement of our physique, which goes with our attempts to reach perfection, will at least benefit our children. If it does not give us sufficient strength, at least it guarantees our health." Having delivered himself of such lectures, Himmler invariably flopped on a couch and called on his masseur to restore vitality to his worn-out limbs. It was not until the end of 1937 that the Reichsfuehrer S.S., in the privacy of his park, submitted himself to the test. Wolff, stop-watch in hand, stood by. Embarrassed officials of the Sports Association watched from a safe distance. There is no need to record that Himmler passed all tests. Wolff's stop-watch guaranteed that. The officials were anxious to hand over the badge quickly and to remove themselves from the awkward candidate's presence. They need not have worried. Himmler was as happy as a boy when, at long last, he had made the grade. Or, as it happened so often in his life, when he thought that he had made it.

On his travels around Germany he attended S.S. functions, dedicated old oaks and other symbols of Germanic origin as S.S. shrines for the Black Guards to worship and to perform their ceremonies—including marriages—in true Teutonic style. There

were rumours, as yet completely unfounded, that an internal conflict was threatening the much-vaunted comradeship-in-arms of S.S. and Reichswehr, and Himmler was pleased when General Werner von Blomberg, Defence Minister, accepted an invitation to be present at one of his lectures on the functions of the S.S. With Julius Streicher he went to attend a National Peasants' Congress at Bad Harzburg, over which Darre presided and which was turned into a demonstration for the idea of "Blood and Soil"—although Germany's agricultural problems proved to be intractable when attacked with slogans alone. Speaking to the farmers of Germany, Himmler put away his prepared script and told them that he was "groping for a new German religion—nothing un-Christian, to be sure, but something non-Christian and independent of established Christian dogmas, bound up with National Socialist philosophy which had found its manifestation in the advent of Adolf Hitler and the mysticism of blood and soil. . . ."

Rarely during his trips to the south of Germany did Himmler fail to visit Julius Streicher, who was Gauleiter of Nuremberg and the owner of a weekly paper, *Der Stuermer,* which "sublimated" the Rosenberg–Darre–Himmler type of racial theories and translated them into the crudest, lowest form of popular anti-semitism. Streicher, a boorish, crude, uneducated man, who had formed a personal friendship with Hitler in the days of the beerhouse putsch of 1923, sailed in the backwater of the high-sounding philosophy of the three Aryan apostles, and, reducing it to its lowest level, filled the columns of his paper with vulgarity such as had never before appeared in print. His photographers collected pictures of ugly Jews; his reporters ranged the country to find fuel for his campaign.

Himmler ardently nodded consent as he listened to Streicher addressing boys and girls and telling them why the Jews could not possibly be the "chosen people." "A chosen people," he said, "does not rape women and girls . . . does not torture animals . . . does not live by the sweat of others . . . or drive your parents from home and farm . . . all of which is what the Jews are doing." With Streicher's help, Himmler organized a mass meeting of a spurious "World League of Anti-Semites," for which he chose the theme that "the last war was won by Jewry" and therefore "Jewry remains the enemy." Only two years earlier Himmler had publicly proclaimed that "the Jew is a citizen"; now he congratulated Streicher on a speech on the subject: "Jews are Aliens." "The Jews are our Misfortune," *Der Stuermer* proclaimed in red banner headlines. "We know," Streicher said, "that Jewish blood is poisonous." His deduction unmistakably pointed the way to a campaign which he and Himmler had long carefully prepared. The slogan was the "Defence of the German People's Health," and, deliberately, to attract attention of apathetic crowds, Streicher ventured on to the territory of sheer pornography.

Taking his cue from a casual remark of a Bavarian Minister that "Alien albumen is poison," *Der Stuermer* reproduced his views: "Alien albumen," it said, "is the semen of a man of different race. One single act of cohabitation results in the woman's blood being poisoned—for ever. Never again, even if she marries an Aryan, can she give birth to Aryan children—only to bastards in whose breasts dwell two souls and whose physical characteristics prove the mixture of race. These infants are liable to be ugly children of unstable character with a tendency to sickness. . . . And, of course, we know why Jews are attempting with every means to seduce Aryan girls, why Jewish doctors rape their female Aryan patients under the anaesthetic, why Jewish wives even encouraged their husbands to enter into relations with non-Jewish women—so that the German girl, the German woman, should absorb the Jewish poison and never be able to bear German children. . . ."

Bluntly *Der Stuermer* began to print pictures of German girls who had been seen in the company of Jews, of Jews who were thought to be associated with German girls; Himmler's S.S. heroes were ordered to "punish" such offenders against the Reichsfuehrer's ideals. A new word was coined to describe such associations which, in Himmler's and Streicher's eyes, were illicit: *Rassenschande*—Race Shame is the literal translation. A *Rassenschaender*, a man guilty of Race Shame, was stigmatized as a criminal and often subject to insults and violence from the hands of the S.S. Poems in atrocious language, cartoons of unparalleled obscenity, even popular children's fables parodied for the purpose, filled the pages of *Der Stuermer* to hammer home the Himmler–Streicher theory. "Jewry is Criminality," they howled. "How are we teachers to describe the Jew to our pupils?" a question was deliberately framed. "In his whole abysmal depravity . . ." was the answer. Eventually the campaign reached a climax with an article in *Der Stuermer* which defies comment: "As numerous confessions made by Jews show," Streicher's paper wrote on the basis of research conducted by officials of Himmler's Race Office, "the execution of ritual murders is a law of the Talmud Jew . . . the rules are as follows: 'The blood of the victim is tapped by force. On Passover (in memory of the murder of Christ) it is used in wine and matzos. Thus a small part of the blood is poured into the dough of the matzos and into the wine. The mixing is done by the head of the family . . . who empties a few drops of the fresh and powdered blood into a glass, wets the fingers of the left hand with it and sprays (blesses) with it everything on the table . . . then they eat and the head of the family exclaims "May all Gentiles perish as this child whose blood is contained in the bread and wine. . . ." The blood of the slaughtered . . . is further used by young married Jewish couples, by pregnant Jewesses, for circumcision and so on. Ritual murder is recognized.

. . . The Jew believes he thus absolves himself of his sins.'"

There was method in the madness which Himmler had fostered in Streicher's distorted mind. For in Berlin, while *Der Stuermer* whipped up popular support for his plan, Himmler, with the aid of his experts, was working on the draft of a decree to put the Jews outside the community of their German compatriots. The law which was proclaimed on the "Day of the Party" in Nuremberg in 1935 became known as the "Nuremberg Laws," which deprived the German Jews of their citizenship and made them pariahs in their own country. Jews were forbidden to live in marriage or to have extramarital relations with persons of German blood. They had long been precluded from holding public office or civil service appointments. Now they were denied many of the most elementary privileges and freedoms. In the end they were even forbidden to enter certain areas, pavements, public-transport vehicles, places of amusement and restaurants. Though the Nuremberg Laws did not as yet carry the plan of S.S. race experts to its logical conclusion, they were a triumph for Himmler of which he was proud. The dim-witted Streicher, when he faced trial as a war criminal in his home town, Nuremberg, petulantly asserted that he had not even been consulted about the framing of these laws. "I believe, however," he said, "that I have contributed indirectly to the making of these laws." The legal work, initiated in Himmler's Race Office, was sanctioned by Himmler, Rudolf Hess and Dr. Frick.

Himmler exuberantly acknowledged Streicher's spadework. But during the months of close co-operation with the Nuremberg Gauleiter he had, at the same time, himself learned a lesson from Streicher. *Der Stuermer*, apart from providing an outlet for his sadistic instincts, had made Streicher rich. Surely an organization like the S.S., the Reichsfuehrer told himself, should have a similar public organ in which to present his policy and voice his views. Hitler had his own newspaper, *Der Voelkischer Beobachter*, Goebbels owned *Der Angriff*, Goering had acquired an interest in *Die Essener National-Zeitung*. Himmler decided to found *Das Schwarze Korps* (The Black Corps) for himself and his S.S. In 1935 he became a publisher; one of his assistants, Guenther d'Alquen, was appointed editor of his paper. Every week now the German people were able to read what was in the Reichsfuehrer's mind. They soon appreciated that it would be a mistake to overlook the new publication. D'Alquen gave it a character of its own, made it serve a purpose which, obscure and confusing at first, soon began to manifest itself in no uncertain fashion.

Gently, in the first few issues, d'Alquen introduced the little-known S.S. leaders to the general public. Group Leader (Major-General) Wittje, short-lived Chief of the Main Office: Upper Group Leader Darre, still in charge of the Race Office; Group Leader

Heydrich, Chief of the S.D. Main Office; Upper Leader Karl Wolff, Himmler's adjutant; Schmelcher, one of the many new S.S. Police Presidents; Prinz zu Waldeck, group leader and one of the many aristocrats in the ranks of the S.S.; Upper Group Leader Dietrich, of course, the Fuehrer's bodyguard; Baron Eberstein; Group Leaders Schmauser and Jaeckeln; commanders of important S.S. sectors; the leaders of branches and offices were introduced. The Nazi Press, controlled by Himmler's jealous fellow Nazi leaders, had given little publicity to S.S. activities and personalities. Now from the pages of *Das Schwarze Korps*, every week, their faces stared with a curiously stereotyped, hard and rigid expression at the people of Germany.

It was a frightening gallery. But much more frightening was the use to which *Das Schwarze Korps* was soon being put. The red thread which ran through its columns can only be understood by the development of Heydrich's security service, the brains and nerve centre of the S.S. Gradually, from the silent observation of potential and actual enemies of the régime, Heydrich had guided the S.D. to a wider sphere. It was not enough to discover actual or potential opposition; it was necessary to warn deviationists who could not easily be sent to concentration camps. Into the pages of *Das Schwarze Korps* crept ominous reminders of the duties of a good German citizen. Heydrich gradually set himself up as a judge of Party standards, as a critic of State departments and public institutions. Armed with the superior knowledge of his internal espionage organization and information gathered by his snoopers, he examined every public move and personality, every sphere of their private lives. Where he found it inexpedient, or as yet outside his authority to interfere with a direct warning, he recklessly indicted people in *Das Schwarze Korps*.

There were still books in public libraries which he regarded as inimical to the interests of Party and State—*Das Schwarze Korps* denounced the librarian, who, afraid to invite the wrath of the S.S., instantly removed them. A civil servant was nominated to represent Germany at some congress abroad. One glance through the secret files of the S.D. and the Gestapo, and his slightest deviation from the Nazi path (even if it had occurred long before the advent of the Nazi Government) was exposed in the S.S. weekly. As time went on *Das Schwarze Korps* did not hesitate to attack members of the Government, if only by implication.

In a country where the freedom of the Press had long been ruthlessly suppressed and not a single leading article could be written without the approval of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, *Das Schwarze Korps* hit out in all directions and without restraint or inhibition. The paper spread fear among those whom it censured —official action by the Gestapo invariably and inescapably followed

if the warning was not heeded. When challenged by leading Nazis, Heydrich pretended that the S.S. weekly provided a safety-valve because, he said, it convinced the people that among the mass of flatly uniform newspapers devoted solely to the praise and achievements of the Nazi Government there was at least one courageous enough to expose abuses. That the exposure was invariably designed to tighten the shackles around the neck of the German people still further, to intensify the dictatorship of the Party and close the tiniest loopholes into personal freedom, did not occur to those who really welcomed the brutal frankness of the paper.

Reinhard Heydrich did not allow much time to elapse after the publication of *Das Schwarze Korps* before he used the opportunity, in a series of articles under his own name, to put before the S.S. —and the non-Party readers of the paper—some of his conception of the "Changes in our Struggle"—the struggle which he was conducting. "The elimination of the political parties," he explained, "does not mean that the age-old opponents of our ideas have been defeated. We must," he exhorted the S.S., "try to recognize them in all their guises, seek them out and destroy them—or else perish ourselves." Leaving the public indictment of the Jews to Julius Streicher, he concentrated his main attack on one "visible opponent"—the Churches. "The church authorities," he wrote, "are creating popular distrust in the mission of the Fuehrer. Look at the leadership of the Church," he asserted. "Mountains of documents reveal the moral and cultural corruption of Church leaders whose aim is not the preservation of religious and cultural values but the domination of Germany."

To reinforce his argument and to reflect the reasons for which Himmler claimed to have left the Church, the Gestapo initiated a vile campaign against all religious communities. Just as Streicher's *Der Stuermer* specialized in publishing revolting cartoons of Jews, so *Das Schwarze Korps* instructed artists to depict abbots, monks, priests and nuns in disgusting poses. The Gestapo swooped on monasteries and convents to discover illegalities, alleged offences against the currency regulations or against the notorious Paragraph 175 (dealing with homosexuality), and long before such charges were proved or the suspected persons brought before a court *Das Schwarze Korps* published their names and pictures "to expose these criminals disguised in the soutanes of priests and the habits of nuns." Under a cartoon depicting two Benedictine brothers the S.S. paper stated without giving further details: "The foreign-exchange investigation department, Berlin, informs *us* that offences against foreign-exchange regulations have been established in Catholic monasteries. A number of the involved pious brothers and sisters are under arrest. . . ." The campaign, as in the case of Streicher's anti-Jewish outbursts, had a purpose. It was designed to

gain popular support for the so-called "National Church" of German bishops, who, in defiance of instructions from the higher church authorities, had agreed to co-operate with the Nazi Government.

Himmler personally instructed the editor of his paper to lash out against a Catholic publication, *Christkoenigsbote* (Messenger of King Christ), which had dared to denounce Streicher's anti-Semitic teachings by writing: "If, in fact, ritual murders have occurred hundreds of years ago, it is just a misleading attempt at incitement of public opinion to say there is such a thing as a Jewish ritual murder now. These writings do not spring from Christian ideals and do not serve Christianity." In the columns of the S.S. paper pictures of strongly armed S.S. units flanked the attacks and accusations with unmistakable implications. When, one week, *Das Schwarze Korps* had quoted—"without comment"—the speech of a priest who had said that "nothing will induce me to accept the authority of a National Church," the result was almost automatic. The ink was not dry on the quotation in Himmler's paper when the courageous priest was whisked away by the Gestapo and taken to Dachau concentration camp. But the courage of the Catholic clergy matched the ferocity of the S.S. "We prefer a Jew or a Negro with a pure soul," preached a Franciscan priest from the pulpit of Cologne Cathedral, "to any Aryan sinner!" *Das Schwarze Korps* nearly choked in anger.

Himmler spent hours discussing ways and means of "breaking the power of the Churches" without even admitting to himself or others that Christianity may be a more formidable enemy than Jewry. There was, however, an indication that he and Heydrich regarded the job as a long-term undertaking, when among the many measures under review they developed a pernicious idea—so pernicious that even Hitler refused his approval when it was put before him. Why not, Himmler suggested, destroy the Church from within if it proved itself resilient beyond expectation and powerful enough to survive his frontal attacks. There are scores of loyal S.S. youngsters who could be sent to colleges to be trained—and eventually to be ordained as priests. With a great number of such S.S. Trojan horses in the ranks of the Church it would be easy, at a given signal, to cause a revolt and so much confusion that it would ruin the prestige of the Church.

Attacks on the Church were soon followed by alleged exposures of the "crimes committed by organized Freemasonry," by a smear campaign against modern artists—while the painting of "dignified" nude women was encouraged. (Streicher, after all, had done well by his appeal to the baser instincts of readers.) From 1935 onwards *Das Schwarze Korps* took its place by the side of the Gestapo and the concentration camps, the civilian Security Service and the uniformed S.S., as another instrument of the Himmler terror.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE OTHER HEINRICH

ALREADY in 1935 Heinrich Himmler, to most people who knew him, was "an incredible, enigmatic figure."[1] But inquiries among his closest friends and members of his entourage do not bear out the views of those who were convinced that, apart from being ignorant and naïve, he was simply insensitive, cold and indifferent to the horrors perpetrated on his orders. To outsiders, to the rank and file of the S.S., even to some of the S.S. leaders who spent much time in his company, it is true, he presented a "cold, complacent expression of puffy smoothness" (to use Trevor-Roper's brilliant description). They really thought that the regularity of his meals, the routine of his office was never disturbed even while he committed tens of thousands to the horror camps or, later, to death in the gas-chambers. Neither his brother, nor his valet and his bodyguard, nor his *aides*, confirm this superficial picture of the man in whom public imagination saw an inhuman monster, a Mephistopheles, a sadist without counterpart in history. Neither was his, as has been suggested, a split personality, a double nature —one side in perfect harmony with his outward appearance of an insignificant schoolmaster, the other hidden in his heart.

Himmler was a fanatic, single-minded and unimaginative to the verge of idiocy. Yet there is ample evidence to show how greatly his more outrageous decisions disturbed his inflexible mind. Had he been cleverer he might have been able to suggest compromises in the solution of the problems with which he dealt. But the frontiers of his mind were sadly narrowed by his preconceived notions. The decisions he took were the best according to his light. Yet, though there was nothing wrong with him physically, whenever he took a major decision he suffered from agonizing headaches and later from severe stomach cramps. "Was he suffering from any ailment?" I asked Gebhard Himmler. "What else could have caused these pains?"

"Worry!" was the unequivocal answer. "He was carrying such a tremendous responsibility on his shoulders. Hitler always let him and his conscience bear the brunt of indispensable measures." "Let Himmler deal with it," Hitler had begun to say already in the mid-

[1] *The Last Days of Hitler*, by H. R. Trevor-Roper (Macmillan, London).

'thirties. Let Himmler deal—with the Jews, with the Catholics, with Party members whose loyalty was in doubt, with every type of dirty business which had—in Hitler's view—to be transacted. Automatically—and, of course, because he proved responsive and useful in this sphere—Himmler became the big stick of the Nazi régime. A stupid pride in his position and the authority over others with which it invested him alleviated the burden of his decisions. The step-wise rise to prominence, the gradual expansion of his sphere of influence, compensated him for the price in mental torture which he was beginning to pay. His bad conscience, in fact, sometimes literally hurt so much that it seemed to split his head. He had to grit his teeth so hard that one could see his jaw muscles protrude through the flabby skin of his cheeks. It was not long before his frenzy, camouflaged by his studiously rigid, impassive, unchangeable expression, drove him to seek a way out of the mental cul-de-sac by appeals to soothsayers, astronomers, charlatans of all kinds. This search for consolation, this hunt for reassurance about the future, was not the expression of "insensitivity." It was proof of a deep-seated perturbation, of plain bad conscience. But to drown this bad conscience he also simultaneously—or conversely—threw himself passionately into affairs of office and State. Bad conscience thus fired his ambition. The realization of his immeasurable guilt became a spur and eventually the real motor of his rise to power far beyond his capabilities.

He was as yet only in the initial stages of this complicated psychological development when, to his great joy, a telegram was delivered to his office in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse. Dated 7 October, 1935, it read: "My dear Party Comrade Himmler, on the occasion of your birthday I am sending you my heartfelt greetings and add my wish that you may in future as hitherto devote your whole strength to the security of the National Socialist Reich. *Signed:* Adolf Hitler." To show how well he performed these duties the Reichsfuehrer S.S. invited several eminent visitors to make a tour of inspection of the concentration camp in Dachau. Dachau, within two years, had become the stronghold of the S.S., the depot of the S.S. regiment "Deutschland" and, of course, of the Death Head Brigades. Accompanied by Rudolf Hess, Himmler led his guests around the vast S.S. preserve. "The Dachau camp," wrote an enthusiastic reporter, "presents a *surprisingly* pleasant picture. Brightly painted buildings gleam in the spring sunshine. . . ." Dachau, Himmler explained, had originally been designed as a munitions factory. That was in 1915. It was never completed, he said, and at the First World War's end the main part of the installations were rotting and ruined, although a few buildings had survived as a small gunpowder factory. "Only a small part of the Dachau establishment houses the concentration camp," Himmler

told his guests. That was true enough—tens of thousands of prisoners were herded together in a narrow space while a few hundred S.S. leaders occupied roomy modern villas with every comfort, set in spacious gardens laid out and maintained by the labour of prisoners.

"What magnificent work of reconstruction the S.S. had done here," Himmler boasted. No S.S. man, in fact, had as much as lifted a stone. The preliminary work, canalization, water-supply—which Himmler said had to be done before this S.S. suburb could come into being—these pleasant houses, colourful gardens . . . they were built by the sweat and blood of the slaves whom the S.S. guarded behind barbed-wire. There were hospitals, airy dining-rooms for the S.S. rank and file, administrative blocks equipped with the latest technical devices, barracks, "soldierly but comfortable," the camp's own water and heating installation, a small power station—everything accomplished, Himmler emphasized, without funds from State or Party. He did not mention that thousands of concentration-camp inmates had paid for it! Working on hunger rations, their blood flowing freely under the whips of the guards, they had built barrack-squares for the training of their torturers, riding-schools which served them as a pretence to carry—and use—their whips. One of the tall young S.S. men of Dachau who served as a lieutenant on the staff of the S.S. riding-school, though Himmler as yet hardly knew him, was Hermann Fegelein, later to become Himmler's own liaison officer in Hitler's War H.Q. and, in a way, the Fuehrer's brother-in-law.

Himmler's friends on the Dachau jaunt took tea in the drawing-room of Theodor Eicke's villa before quickly walking through the barbed-wire enclosure behind which the prisoners had waited for the past six hours, standing to attention without permission to move, miserable figures, their hair cropped short, their emaciated bodies covered by the striped rags which were their "uniform." Having pointed out to Rudolf Hess one or two of his most "prominent" prisoners, Himmler hurried the Fuehrer's deputy and his other guests away. He was gratified because Hess' visit was one of the outward signs of the increasing importance which the régime attached to the personality and the work of Heinrich Himmler.

In the first few months of 1936 he saw more of Hitler than ever before and was even occasionally called to join the *Tafelrunde*, the lunch-time gathering around Hitler's table at the Chancellery, where the Fuehrer and his personal friends discussed the day's important problems. While Hermann Goering dreaded these occasions, at which, he said, "there was never enough to eat," Himmler, owing to his stomach ailment, was usually served with special dishes. It was after these general discussions in a wider circle that Hitler

now sometimes invited Goering and Himmler for a private conference about the future of the German police.

Goering had retained nominal authority over the Prussian police, in which Himmler was officially still described as Deputy Chief of the Gestapo. Now, though Goering tried to resist, Hitler was about to concede Himmler's often repeated arguments that his experience and organization qualified him for an appointment as chief of a truly unified, concentrated, centralized German police. Goering and Himmler were not on friendly terms, but there was, at this stage, no truth in the reports of violent quarrels said to have accompanied this development. Goering's authority had grown, he was generally regarded and accepted as the second man in the Reich and "the show-piece of the movement"; Himmler was a civil servant of the Party, hard working, supported by a large staff and army on whose loyalty he could count, but not as yet a figure to inspire in a man like Goering either fear or respect. Goering had long accepted an appointment as honorary S.S. Upper Group Leader, but he had missed the ceremony at which he should have taken the oath of loyalty and never donned the elaborate S.S. uniform which he had added to his vast wardrobe. By the end of May Goering gave way to Hitler and the consultations were concluded. A simple new decree was promulgated, saying that "Police organization of the Reich had been unified" and that the Reichsfuehrer S.S. had been appointed Chief of German Police in the Reich Ministry of the Interior. "The Chief of the German Police," added the decree, "attends meetings of the Reich Cabinet when his report is under discussion." The Nazi Press explained that as a result of the decree the control over Security Police, Land Police, Gendarmerie, Criminal Police and Secret State Police was now concentrated in the hands of one man. In Daluege and Heydrich, said the Press, the Reichsfuehrer S.S. had two collaborators who had been in the front line of the battle for National Socialism.

Promotion brought with it the usual period of tribulation until, his back stiffened by his subordinates, Himmler was able to steel himself for the new tasks. Party leaders paid him homage during the ceremonies which went with his elevation, and Himmler, attending Cabinet meetings, began to take a greater interest in matters which were as yet outside his sphere of influence. With his personal staff he eagerly discussed Hitler's first move to do away with international treaties. The Nazi Government had decided to occupy the Rhineland in spite of a risk of western retaliation, which, Nazi leaders later admitted, would have sent the Reichswehr scurrying back to the east bank of the Rhine.

Himmler regarded Hitler's first defiance of international treaties not as a challenge to the west, but only as a preliminary measure to protect Germany's rear against the day of the inevitable attack on

the east. In the east was Germany's destiny: in the east Germans, carried forward by S.S. ideas and S.S. strength, would have to resume the task of colonization begun by medieval princes and kings—above all by Heinrich I. Colonization of the east . . . it was the deeper purpose of Hitler's policy, and Himmler's preoccupation with eastern "living-space," with the "sub-human peoples" who as yet inhabited it, made him the natural apostle of this policy and provided another pointer to the prominence which he gained in Nazi councils as soon as Hitler attempted to carry it into practice.

It has been suggested that Himmler's deep and constant preoccupation with Heinrich I was beginning to affect his mind and was a first sign of madness. Yet there seemed to be method in his madness. There were, among Nazi leaders at the time, rumours that Heinrich Himmler thought of himself as a reincarnation of Heinrich I. After the war Himmler's intimates told me that their former chief was, early in 1936, beginning to suffer from delusions of grandeur—in Freudian parlance: an over-compensation of his inferiority complex. Yes, they said, he definitely sometimes imagined himself to be the reincarnation of King Heinrich I—a king and not just the Reichsfuehrer S.S. and Chief of the German Police.

It is easy to understand how Himmler's *aides* arrived at this conclusion. For some time Himmler had been working on a speech to commemorate the death, a thousand years ago, of King Heinrich. His S.S. archaeologists had, on his instructions, been working on a new shrine in honour of Himmler's hero. Now he decided to dedicate this shrine at a ceremony which could leave nobody in doubt that the new Heinrich (Himmler) was determined to lead Germany on the road prescribed by the old King Heinrich. The ceremony took place at Quedlinburg on 2 July, 1936, and there is no better way of conveying the atmosphere in which it was held than by handing over to the S.S. reporter who described it, and to Heinrich Himmler himself, who made the festive speech.

"A thousand years ago," Guenther d'Alquen wrote,[1] "one of the greatest Germans ever died, but today he is so much alive, so close, that we believe to be seeing him physically in our midst. . . . Heinrich I, founder of the First German Reich, whose live spirit is an expression of our new, yet so old, mysticism of eternal life. . . ." D'Alquen, one of Himmler's intimates, when writing was obviously anxious to give substance to Himmler's hallucinations. Accepting them by implication, he hoped to please his supreme commander and to reinforce his conviction that he was, in fact, "the other Heinrich." D'Alquen graphically described the procession of the S.S. leaders who followed the Reichsfuehrer

[1] *Reichsfuehrer Rede zu Quedlinburg*, Gunther d'Alquen (Im Norsland Verlag, Magdeburg, 1936).

to the ruins of Burg Dankwarderode, once a residence of Heinrich I. They moved through the streets of Quedlinburg between newly painted houses, under a forest of flags, through rows of S.S. guards, black-uniformed, silent, motionless. "This," wrote d'Alquen about the shrine at which they assembled, "is no longer a church in the usual sense, this is a real house of God, a festival hall of a strong, all-powerful creator . . ." meaning Heinrich I — or Heinrich Himmler.

Here they stood, the five-foot-six Himmler, looking small and ridiculous under a black, steel helmet, as the members of his staff, not to speak of the giant S.S. guards, towered over him. Anxiously he clutched his sword of honour and twisted a pair of white gloves, biting his lower lip, trembling with emotion. Then he spoke: "Today we stand at the grave of Heinrich I who died exactly a thousand years ago—a creator of the German Reich and yet a figure who has almost been forgotten. . . ." Himmler recalled the conditions which prevailed a thousand years ago. "Open wounds testify to the radical and bloody introduction of Christianity," he said. "The Reich was weakened by the perpetual aspirations to power of the spiritual princes and the Church's interference in temporal affairs. . . ." Then Heinrich became king, but refused to be anointed by the Church and, said Himmler, thus demonstrated that he was not willing to allow the Church to interfere in a Germany under his régime. Carefully choosing his words, Himmler described the other Heinrich as a "clever, cautious, tenacious politician"—like himself, he seemed to imply. The Hungarians, in Heinrich's times, were like the Russians of the 'thirties, threatening an unprotected Germany. Instead of tanks the Hungarians had hordes of horsemen to terrify their enemies. "The sober soldier, Heinrich," Himmler continued, "recognized that the forces of the Germanic tribes were incapable of destroying this enemy."

And what did Himmler's hero do? He concluded an armistice with the superior opponent and used it to prepare for the inevitable final battle. If Europe's statesmen had listened to Himmler they might have been less surprised at the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 which was really an armistice on the pattern of Heinrich I, who, in the end, was, of course, victorious. With tears in his eyes Heinrich Himmler told his listeners that the great king died on 2 July, A.D. 936, at the age of sixty, to be buried at the crypt in front of which they were standing now. "We Germans of the twentieth century," he said, when he had recovered his composure again, "should know the source of the strength which filled Heinrich I. He was a leader surpassing his people in strength, greatness and sagacity, inspired by the principle of loyalty, ruthless against his enemies, loyal and grateful to his comrades and friends, faithful to his given word, conscientious in keeping treaties, re-

spectful for things which are holy to others. He was a man who never forgot that the strength of the German people lies in the purity of their blood, and he realized that he could not successfully defend his country if petty influences denied him absolute power."

Himmler, it was clear to his listeners, was not vainly discoursing on past history; he was holding up to them a mirror of his own personality, as he saw himself, and of his political plans. But the speech—Himmler in private conversation often described it as the greatest and most important which he had ever made—ended in an anticlimax. Some of the more sophisticated among the S.S. appreciated the involuntary irony of the situation; to Himmler, on the other hand, it was of tremendous personal significance. "In conclusion," he said finally: "I must make a sad confession—the bones of the great German leader are no longer in their place of burial. Where they are we do not know. We can only have our own thoughts about it. . . ." Karl Wolff, the adjutant who knew more about Himmler than most people, believed he could guess his chief's own thoughts. Teutonic Providence had obviously built the body of Heinrich Himmler around these bones. The more realistic, ironic implication was that Himmler's ideas might, one day, dissolve into thin air and vanish like the bones of his hero and that he had called the S.S. and the whole of Germany to worship before a symbol which was truly empty.

In the spirit of King Heinrich I Himmler's ambitions already began to range beyond the frontiers of Germany. Heydrich brought with him from Munich the young S.S. officer, Walter Schellenberg, and appointed him his deputy in the Main Office of the Security Service. Schellenberg, member of a good family and a widely read young man, had moved from the study of internal affairs to international problems and submitted to Reinhard Heydrich, his immediate superior, his own plans for a scheme to win foreign supporters for National Socialism. Schellenberg's ideas seemed more subtle than the disastrously ineffective methods employed in Austria. Heydrich told Himmler about them and Himmler let his young men have their head.

So far Himmler had shown little interest in the "A.O." (*Auslands Organisation*—Foreign Association) of the Nazi Party. Under the leadership of Ernst Bohle, who was born of German parents, in Bradford, Yorkshire, England (and later became Gauleiter designate of Britain), the "A.O." endeavoured—with much success—to organize Germans living abroad, to enrol them as members of the Nazi Party and to make use of them individually and collectively for "patriotic purposes." Once his attention had been drawn to the potentialities of Bohle's organization, Himmler invited Bohle to don the black uniform of the S.S. and conferred the high rank of an S.S. group leader upon him. Next he suggested that he and

his staff be allowed to inspect the work of the organization. Followed by a large entourage, including the inevitable Wolff and Guenther d'Alquen, Himmler visited the offices of the "A.O." in the Berlin Tiergartenstrasse. After a short public ceremony he retired for discussions with Bohle, secured his assistance in a recruitment drive for the S.S. among Germans living in foreign countries, and also convinced him that it would be useful to appoint suitable reliable members of the foreign German communities to positions in Heydrich's Security Service. Thousands of German refugees abroad, he said, might easily poison the minds of good Germans and incite them against the Nazi Government.

Tasks of infinite variety soon fell to Himmler's Security Service agents abroad. In the reception department of one of London's leading hotels a pleasant, good-looking young German was "learning the trade." He was soon recruited for the Service and received orders to keep discreet observation on prominent guests, political luncheon parties, telephone conversations. A pretty German actress of very good social background, who was resident in London, was proud to be invited by Himmler personally to use her charms in the interests of the Fatherland. Her name opened the doors of many exclusive British homes for her and under cover of her attractive personality she was not slow in trying to penetrate the secrets of the prominent people she met.

Simpler German souls, employed as domestic helps in English households, were summoned to the German Embassy or Consular offices, questioned and induced to keep an eye on their employers. German commercial travellers, business men with connexions in England, were requested to call on the "industrial department" of the Security Service after every trip abroad. Eventually from the discussions between Himmler and Bohle, from the co-operation between Heydrich and the "A.O.," a foreign Intelligence service of the S.S. for plain espionage was developed. In an amateurish, haphazard way it began to compete with the regular Intelligence organization of the German Government. Neither in England nor elsewhere did the results of the efforts justify the investments. Heydrich's spies were never a great menace and his organization achieved its greatest paradoxical success in Great Britain in 1940 when, faced with a German invasion threat, fearful of the Nazi spies which were said to have infiltrated every sphere of British society, the Government locked up some twenty thousand Jewish German refugees, victims of Himmler's policy. How Himmler and Heydrich laughed when the news reached them!

At an early stage of the Berlin discussions Heydrich suggested to Bohle the appointment of "Police Attachés" to Germany's embassies and legations abroad to join military, air and naval, cultural and Press and a host of other attachés performing more

conventional duties. When challenged about these appointments, normally of trusted S.S. officers who reported to Himmler directly, German Foreign Office officials insisted that the Police Attachés were not different from the Security Officers which every country delegated to the staffs of its diplomatic representatives. But Himmler's Police Attachés did not keep only German diplomatic staffs under surveillance. Their conception of security included every type of foreign activity which they deemed of interest or potentially inimical and dangerous to Germany. However clumsily and unsuccessfully they went about their jobs, they became plain spies protected by diplomatic immunity. Immediately, through the Bohle organization, the Security Service began to compile lists of "dangerous enemies" of the Third Reich. When these lists were discovered after the war it appeared, for instance, that the Security Service had listed two thousand three hundred persons in Britain "to be placed immediately under arrest" as soon as German troops had occupied the country. Winston Churchill headed the list. The rest were given in alphabetical order. Under "F" the list enumerated, among others, ". . . Dingle Foot, Arnold Foster, Rosita Forbes, Willi Frischauer . . . Sigmund Freud . . ."

In the initial stages of Himmler's attempt to gain an influence on the conduct of Germany's foreign affairs, his staff was still sadly out of step with official policy. Goering, in 1935, had resumed his attempts to win over Italy and to bring about an alliance between the two leading European dictators. But Heydrich disliked Mussolini, who had come to the aid of Austria in 1934. He instructed *Das Schwarze Korps* to attack Italy's campaign in Abyssinia violently and with a galaxy of bitter cartoons. The S.S. newspaper paradoxically came out as the champion of the Negus' black-skinned people. S.S. "foreign policy" throughout remained confused, full of contradiction and amateurish—even more so when another S.S. dignitary, Joachim von Ribbentrop, took it over. But already in 1935 Schellenberg's office was decorated by a big map on which foreign countries were divided into S.S. sectors. S.S. leaders were appointed to each of these sectors. In every country of the world where Germans lived the German S.S. organization had a small but closely knit counterpart. With a side glance at foreign Germans by no means enamoured of the Nazi system, Himmler asked his foreign representatives to take an oath of special significance: "If all are disloyal," they were ordered to swear, "we remain loyal!"

While Heydrich left little undone to assure the loyalty of Germans by all means, he based his foreign schemes on the disloyalty of foreigners. As the only prominent S.S. leader with little interest in his Reichsfuehrer's symbolic frills and high-sounding phrases, he set about expanding the foreign department of the Security

Service in which the contours of an organized foreign espionage organization were already discernible. Like Himmler he was, at the same time, looking eastwards. Many Russian émigrés, refugees from Bolshevism, had settled in Germany and were in close contact with the larger body of their like-minded compatriots in Paris and other European capitals. Heydrich deliberately sought out the most active and influential among these refugees, who gladly supplied him with information about Soviet Russia, obtained through friends and relatives who had stayed behind but were as anxious as they were to damage the Stalin régime. The world thought of these Russian émigrés as romantic figures, mostly princes and duchesses who now earned their living as Paris taxi-drivers or waiters in fashionable Berlin restaurants. But Heydrich was fully aware of the more serious undercurrent in their activities.

There were among them, however, quite a few who were not averse to earning a dishonest penny in a two-way traffic with information. They would sell their wares to Heydrich's agents, but send back to Soviet Russia every tit-bit of information they could gather in Germany. Some of them worked hand in hand with emissaries of the G.P.U., the Russian Secret Police. It was a dark, deep, dirty water in which Heydrich went fishing with great gusto, and from the depth of this inter-Russian morass emerged, among a few highly dubious sea-serpents, a number of dramatically interesting items. One of them was the story of a widespread conspiracy to unseat the Stalin Government and to usurp power in Russia. Secret reports and rumours linked the plan with Marshal Mihail N. Tukhachevsky, at the time Deputy Defence Commissar of the Soviet Union. A former Gestapo official who should know the facts has recently revealed that Heydrich seized on these rumours with great alacrity. Whether they were true or false, they could obviously provide a means of damaging the Soviet system—perhaps irretrievably. Heydrich lost no time in putting all his information before Himmler. Here, obviously, was a chance to soften up the Soviet colossus in preparation for the frontal attack of which Himmler was dreaming.

The plan which the two men hatched was complicated by the activity of the regular German Intelligence Organization under Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, eventually influenced, few experts doubt today, by an extremely cunning manoeuvre of Stalin and his government. Heydrich, as the weeks went by, realized that the Reichswehr and Admiral Canaris were as interested in the reports about Mihail Tukhachevsky as he and Himmler were. But it appeared that their line of approach was simple and direct. There had already been two spectacular treason trials in Russia, as a result of which the alleged followers of Trotsky inside Russia had been eliminated. If there was also a powerful opposition of

influential Russian Army leaders against Stalin—why, the obvious and logical German reaction was to support the opposition and to resume co-operation with the Russian Army, which had previously been close. It had been intense after the First World War when Soviet Russia offered hospitality to the Reichswehr's secret air force (barred under the Versailles Treaty) to train and experiment on Russian territory. To Himmler and Heydrich such co-operation seemed futile, dangerous, even criminal. Far from supporting Canaris's moves, they decided to "split the Soviet administration wide open," to betray Tukhachevsky — if he was guilty — and denounce him even if he was innocent and, if necessary, on the strength of forged documents. If successful the coup could render Stalin's army leaderless and impotent.

Through the Russian "underground," Heydrich, to this end, got into touch with a Russian political agent, a member of the G.P.U., who had "gone over" to Germany. A leading Security Service officer, S.S. Colonel Behrens, was ordered to co-operate with the Russian. In a cellar of the Prinz Albrechtstrasse, Behrens established an elaborate forger's laboratory where the German-Russian pair eventually produced a batch of documents allegedly proving Tukhachevsky's treasonous plans. Among the documents were letters bearing the forged signatures of German generals who were supposed to have been in contact with the Russians. Heydrich decided to organize a leak by which to play these documents into Stalin's hands, thus unmasking Tukhachevsky and his high-ranking fellow conspirators. These documents, when Tukhachevsky and seven other leading Russians were eventually indicted by Andrei Vyshinsky, then Soviet Public Prosecutor, formed part of the prosecution's evidence. The story, as told by former Gestapo men, is that Heydrich eventually sold them to the Soviet, who paid for them with a small fortune in Russian roubles—a welcome addition to the funds with which Heydrich financed his own anti-Soviet agents inside Russia. (The story becomes more involved and the character of these transactions evident if we believe an account of the sequel to this side-issue. Stalin, it is said, actually cheated Heydrich by paying with forged rouble notes and, when they finally turned up in Russia, was able to trace through them Heydrich's agents and to put them behind lock and key.)

Far more worldly wise and experienced in the shady craft of espionage than the young Heydrich, Canaris and his staff opposed the S.S. interference and Heydrich's plan from the beginning. It was too late when they suggested that Heydrich, while regarding himself as a diabolically clever Intelligence expert, may have been used as a tool by Soviet agents who were only too anxious to have the help of the Gestapo and the Security Service in the

procurement of documents to incriminate Tukhachevsky. Canaris did not live to tell his part of the story, but his surviving collaborators say that, had he thought it opportune, he could have handed over to Russia genuine communications and documents proving the connexion between the Russian conspirators and the German Reichswehr. There was no need for the forgeries, still less occasion to use the services of a doubtful ex-G.P.U. man. Canaris was playing a far more subtle, long-term but potentially more profitable game. By "stringing along" with Tukhachevsky without actually supporting his plan for an immediate revolt, he wanted to influence Tukhachevsky's timing and choose a more opportune moment—for instance, the day of the outbreak of a war between Russia and Germany which everybody regarded as inevitable. Stalin, in such a critical moment, Canaris contended, could not have shot eight leading generals without jeopardizing his strategy, indeed his war plans as a whole. Reichswehr Intelligence officers, members of the *Abwehr* (Defence) as the department was called, told Heydrich that he might have known from his own experience (the Roehm purge) how comparatively easy it was in a dictatorship to crush opposition and kill the instigators with or without the formality of a trial.

The Tukhachevsky trial was duly staged in Moscow in June, 1937. As it became the practice in many such trials, the indicted Soviet generals made a full confession of their crimes. Vyshinsky's final spech for the prosecution lasted barely half an hour. The verdict of the military tribunal was never in doubt. The eight accused were convicted and condemned to death. Details of the proceedings were never published. Heydrich could, however, boast that in the Russian trial in which Bukharin, Rykov and Radek were indicted for treasonable activities, one of the minor figures in the dock "admitted" publicly that he had received his orders from an employee of Himmler's Gestapo—he should have said "Security Service." It was a passing reference which caused much comment at the time.

The sensational affair had repercussions of which few observers were as yet aware. In the conflict between the Himmler-Heydrich group and Canaris's *Abwehr*, Himmler had sought and obtained the support of Hitler, who personally authorized Heydrich to "sell" the incriminating documents to the Russians. Admiral Canaris, who, at best, had never been a friend of the Nazi régime, suffered a rebuff. He did not forgive either Hitler or Himmler. Himmler and Heydrich began to look at Germany's Chief of Intelligence as their enemy, whose name they marked down for a final reckoning. Instead of splitting the Russian Army, Heydrich had clumsily sown the seeds of a deep and violent conflict in the delicate organization of Germany's Secret Service in which Canaris and Himmler

continued to compete until the end. German "Intelligence" suffered gravely from the often contradictory schemes of these two groups whose animosity greatly hampered Germany's efficient conduct of the war.

Himmler's excursion into the field of foreign affairs would have remained unnoticed in Germany had he not given instructions to convey a public hint of his new interests. In S.S. publications. gradually also in the whole German Press, the time-honoured phraseology of references to the Reichsfuehrer and his S.S. was slightly changed. A thousand times Germany had seen the S.S. described as "the guardians against the internal enemies of Fuehrer and Reich." Now they could draw their own conclusions when they read the new version which referred to the Black Guards as "guardians against the internal *and external* enemies. . . ." The tentacles of the S.S. Reich were reaching beyond the frontiers of Germany.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BATTLE FRONT: INNER GERMANY

"AND here, Herr Reichsfuehrer, are the figures referring to the consumption of mineral waters . . . business is very good!"

Karl Wolff stood to attention, facing the desk of his chief. Mineral water was an important subject. The firm producing it had been acquired by the S.S. "Heinrich Himmler," one of his *aides* said, "was anxious lest alcohol should undermine the health and physique of his S.S. men. Soft drinks in his opinion were unreasonably expensive!" Therefore he gave orders to force a famous firm producing mineral waters to sell out to the S.S. "I have learned this sort of thing from the Socialist countries!" he said. The price of mineral water, for S.S. men, was reduced by twenty per cent. Himmler insisted on checking accounts personally and watched the progress of "his firm." Later he acquired many others—building firms, clothing and shoe factories, eventually even a small-arms factory, and the S.S. pocketed the profits.

Such ventures earned him the admiration of his greedy and corrupt Party comrades. But they shook their heads in wonderment when they heard of some of his other enterprises. Hitler is reported to have laughed heartily when Goering told him that the "Reichsheini" (Heinrich of the Reich), as Himmler was often called, had struck another new idea. "It's something to do with the Indo-Germanic race!" Goering said, and slapped his thighs in laughter. It is quite true that Himmler's extravagant ideas caused much amusement in higher Nazi circles. But nobody ever criticized him to his face, nobody stopped him, and those who could see farther ahead thought they could once more discover a certain method in his madness.

That was the position when another Himmler venture was publicly announced, a society called *Ahnenerbe* (meaning, literally, Ancestral Heritage), and when the Reichsfuehrer attended a lecture by a learned professor, Dr. Walther Wuest, who explained what it meant: "*Ahnenerbe* for us," said Wuest, "is a spiritual fact of the soul, embracing generations of Germans—us as well as the Germanic tribes and, before them, the ancient people whom we describe as the Indo-Germanic race. Thus we have become the guardians of these ancient peoples' heritage and claim the

inheritance which, from a small nucleus, has spread all over the world and can be recognized today in the mirror of Indo-Germanic language and culture. . . ." It sounded crazy, and the statute of the new society, when it was solemnly published and Professor Dr. Walther Wuest revealed himself as S.S. Sturmbannfuehrer (captain) Wuest and trustee of the organization, did little to dispel this impression. The task of the society, of which Reichsfuehrer S.S. H. Himmler figured as president, was officially described as "the investigation of space, spirit, accomplishments and heritage of the Indo-Germanic peoples of Nordic race, and the vivification of the results of their research and their transmission to the people." To realize these aims it was provided that instruction and research centres should be established, that research work and research expeditions should be sponsored, scientific work with a bearing on the subject be supported and scientific congresses organized. As in most cases when Himmler created an organization of this kind, it was linked to a Foundation to obtain donations and thus finance the work.

Behind this pseudo-scientific verbiage Himmler disguised his attempt to prove the existence of Germanic people who, whatever their current nationality, should regard themselves as Germans and eventually become members of the German nation, as the territory in which they lived should become part of the German Reich. From then onwards *Ahnenerbe* experts began to study relics of human skeletons, the bone structure of finds in many countries. Under the pretence of "scientific exchanges," German museums, on Himmler's instructions, corresponded with foreign institutions to obtain material on Germany's ancestral heritage. It did not occur to unsuspecting foreign scientists that such material, ungrudgingly supplied, might soon be put to political use and provide Hitler with a pretence for some of his most extravagant territorial demands.

How far he was prepared to go emerged when an expedition to Tibet by Dr. Schaeffer, a German scientist, was financed by *Ahnenerbe*. In Tibet, Himmler was convinced, Dr. Schaeffer would find many traces of ancient Indo-Germanic people. But with the "colonization" of the East—of Russia—in view, he also ordered Schaeffer to try to bring back specimens of Asiatic horses from which a new type "steppe horse" could be bred. In a war in the wastes of Siberia such horses may become more valuable than a division of tanks. *Ahnenerbe* paid out vast sums for S.S. experts to follow Himmler's instruction and undertake large-scale excavations.

Art treasures were Goering's very profitable hobby, and, however busy, he was always accessible to art dealers who had an interesting object to offer for sale. Himmler, who was so over-

Himmler in Rome, 1937. (*Left to right*): Von Hassel (German Ambassador), Himmler and Bocchini (Chief of Italian Police).

Himmler reviewing police detachments on German Police Day, 1937. (*Left to right*): Himmler, Hühnlein, Heydrich and Daluege.

Himmler (*left*) and Heydrich leaving their hotel in Vienna after the German occupation of Austria (March, 1938).

whelmed with work — which he did most conscientiously — that department chiefs had to wait a week before he could find time to listen to their reports, had given strict instructions to his secretariat to admit any caller with a "historical find." "I have to buy a piece of medieval cutlery every time I want to see the Reichsfuehrer," said a well-known S.S. leader cynically. For a long time the whole *Ahnenerbe* complex of the Himmler organization looked simply laughable. It was only much later that the apparently harmless society revealed itself as a cruel menace under whose auspices dastardly crimes were committed. But already in 1936 and 1937 it was by no means the plaything which German and foreign observers regarded it.

The same applies to another Himmler foundation—a charitable organization he called it— "*Lebensborn*" (Fountain of Life). Any mention of *Lebensborn* was liable to raise a superior, knowing smile in the circles of the malicious, gossiping Nazi leaders who thought they knew what was in Himmler's mind when he sponsored this organization. It had not remained a secret that Himmler had become estranged from his wife, partly, it was thought, because Adolf Hitler had formed an unaccountable prejudice towards her and she seemed to hinder Himmler's relations with his Fuehrer. She spent most of her time in Lindenfycht, in Bavaria, while Himmler lived in Berlin. He was, in fact, living with another woman, who had fulfilled his great wish—to bear him a son. She soon gave birth to a second boy whose father was also Heinrich Himmler. Himmler was proud of his two boys—yet they, to this day, do not know who their father was, and are growing up unburdened by the name which carries with it the curse of millions.

As he was the father of two illegitimate children, it was, in Nazi circles, regarded as only natural that the Reichsfuehrer S.S. should tactfully overlook the frequent extra-marital escapades of his staff when they produced similar results, and should be anxious to help any member of his large S.S. army who found himself in a similar position. While as yet not actually advocating illegitimacy, it was known that Himmler did not by any means regard it as a social crime. When Himmler went farther and said that nothing should be done to limit the productivity of German women, implying that, to his mind, marriage was not a necessary preliminary to parenthood, it was also, at first, taken as a personal reaction to his own position and that of his unmarried wife.

But the creation of *Lebensborn*, while it may originally have been hastened by such considerations, had a much deeper purpose. "The statutes of *Lebensborn*," said the indictment of its leaders when, after the war, they were brought to trial before a German de-Nazification court, "do not convey an idea of its tasks, which can only be understood in conjunction with the work and pro-

gramme of other S.S. departments, which served the double purpose of decimation of foreign peoples and the strengthening of the German Folkdom. . . ." In Germany, in the late 'thirties, *Lebensborn* was regarded as an admirable institution which gave protection and assistance to unmarried mothers of German blood. It had facilities to take illegitimate children under its care where necessary and, supported by funds from the S.S. exchequer, controlled homes for mothers and children. But there was a close connexion between the arms drive which Hermann Goering was conducting in these years and the official encouragement of the production of German babies which Himmler had made his cause. Already mothers of large families were being decorated with a "Mother's Cross" and received subventions from the State. S.S. men, when they married, were expected to have at least four children—Heydrich soon conformed—and Himmler lost no opportunity of encouraging, often crudely and publicly, every other member of his staff to emulate Heydrich's example.

It was an obvious policy which clearly dovetailed with Hitler's strategic plans. There could be no doubt that the forthcoming campaigns of expansion would demand a heavy price in German blood and lives, while great territorial conquest would test German manpower resources when it came to policing foreign conquered peoples. Hitler may have thought in terms of quick victory. Himmler was prepared to pay a heavy price for *Lebensraum* (living space). He was determined to make sure that the German Reich should not emerge from a victorious campaign weakened by the lack of manpower and unable to replace the losses swiftly. *Lebensborn* was just one of the institutions to provide against this dreaded possibility. Babies—German children, whether their parents were married or not—were just as essential to Nazi strategy as guns and planes. Indeed, Himmler thought, armaments were useless without them.

He had not yet reached the point where he was ready to confess to another idea which was beginning to take concrete shape in his mind. There were obviously too many Slavs in the east to allow the Germans to move in and to live on the fat of the land. Some of them might be useful as slaves to work for their S.S. masters, but many of them, perhaps many millions, would have to disappear. Those with "Indo-Germanic" roots he hoped to lead back into the Nordic-German fold, to Germanize them or their offspring. But the rest—and only one or two of his friends knew what was in his mind—might have to be exterminated. To populate the vast areas to come under German control as an outcome of war it was not only necessary to replace German losses, but to bring into being ever more and more Germans of an impeccable racial standard. It all came back to *Lebensborn*—to a German Fountain, from which life could flow in a rich, unending, growing stream.

Lebensborn, in the meantime, became an inescapable reality in the lives of every S.S. man. Himmler announced that it would mainly serve to "encourage large S.S. families." Every S.S. official or member of the military S.S. formations had to pay a monthly contribution to *Lebensborn* funds. Unmarried functionaries were taxed very heavily for the purpose—a bachelor *Obergruppenfuehrer's* (General) obligatory contribution was two hundred and fifty marks, or roughly £20, per month. The same general—as in the case of Heydrich—if he was the father of four children, had to pay one mark only. At first *Lebensborn* homes admitted only babies of unmarried mothers whose fathers were S.S. men. By 1937 they were already opened to all unmarried mothers and their children if S.S. doctors, under the supervision of the Race Office, declared them as healthy and of sound racial background.

On Himmler's orders unmarried mothers who entrusted themselves to the *Lebensborn* organization were pressed to forgo all rights to their children and leave their care to the S.S.—or, as Himmler described it, to the State. Poor, harassed girls were asked to sign away their babies with lurid promises of the great future which awaited these "children of the Reich." They would be relieved of all obligations for them. Himmler and his men left nothing untried to combat the natural feeling of motherly love which automatically revolted against such suggestions. The extent of their failure to distort human nature only became apparent after the war when the affairs of *Lebensborn* were investigated. Less than two per cent of the unmarried mothers whom *Lebensborn* got into its clutches submitted to the S.S. pressure and abandoned the children to Himmler. Originally attached to the S.S. Race Office, Himmler, in 1936, took *Lebensborn* under his personal authority. He appointed a formidable committee of S.S. dignitaries to watch over the development of the unfortunate little bastards to full S.S. manhood. The committee included S.S. General Oswald Pohl, Himmler's economic adviser, and S.S. Dr. Grawitz, the so-called Reich Doctor S.S., or chief of the S.S. medical services.

The real purpose of *Lebensborn*, the full nature of its activities, when they were extended to foreign countries, was so well camouflaged that Himmler received much praise for his humanitarian work. He presented himself as a humanitarian when in a speech in Berlin, while declaring "merciless war against certain kinds of immorality," he declared himself opposed to every kind of unjustified social ostracism to which German unmarried mothers had hitherto been subjected. "At last we have institutions to accept them in an honourable way . . . ," he said. Indeed, a usually well-informed anti-Nazi observer said that he "felt forced to concede that the introduction of certain social services reflected great credit on the S.S. leadership. The way in which hapless illegitimate

children are being cared for could serve as an example for many progressive governments. . . ."

Himmler, around this time, asked Heydrich to bury the hatchet and make peace with Mussolini's Italy. At long last he had been advised of the change of climate in the relations between the two Fascist countries. He greatly welcomed an invitation to visit Italy and to meet Signor Bocchini, the Italian police minister. Accompanied by Heydrich and Wolff, he went to Rome, where in his capacity as chief of the German police he received the honours due to him as a member of a friendly government. He reviewed units of the Italian police and attended meetings at which Heydrich gave his Italian colleagues a few hints about his own very effective methods of combating the "internal enemy." In the Lipari Islands, Mussolini's Government had long established an "Italian Dachau," but although anti-Fascist Italians were held there under severe conditions there was no evidence of organized and deliberate cruelty which was a feature of Himmler's concentration camps. From Himmler's first visit to Italy—it became an annual event to which he looked forward with great anticipation—sprang the close cooperation between the two police forces. Mussolini, who fêted Himmler, Heydrich and Wolff, had no idea that one day Wolff would become police dictator in Italy and as powerful a force in the land as the Duce ever was.

On Himmler's home ground in Germany the S.S. seemed to have the situation well in hand. Hitler was putting the finishing touches to his plans to extend the German *Lebensraum* and, as a first move, to absorb "German" Austria—as he called the country of his birth. The generals were being treated to elaborate expositions of his political and strategic views, the General Staff was kept busy by his requests to prepare plans for campaigns against Czechoslovakia and Poland. Himmler's task in the event of war was being defined. For the time being his sphere of activity was to be confined to Germany. Having received his orders, he proceeded to work out the details of the assignment. For the S.S. and the police he produced a strategic plan which, when he submitted it to the Cabinet, surprised even many Nazi leaders.

The details of his plan emerged from a speech which, a few weeks later, Himmler made to a large audience of German generals, many of whom heard him speak for the first time. They agreed that Himmler was a better orator than it was generally assumed, even though, with an almost maniacal monotony, he followed Hitler's example of devoting a large part of every speech to a historical review. This time the measures for internal security to be taken in the event of war were the subject of his speech. But it came as a shock to the generals when he announced the title: *Kriegsschauplatz Inner-Deutschland*—Battle Front Inner-Germany. He was,

of course, not even remotely considering the possibility that Germany would ever fight a war on German territory. The title referred to the fight against the "internal enemy" who might be tempted to attack the Nazi régime at home once it became involved in battle abroad. Himmler's purpose was to enlist the help of the Army in such a contingency. But his exposition had an unexpected sequel. The Army generals so profoundly disagreed with Himmler that one of them, acting with the approval of the majority of Himmler's high-ranking listeners, handed over a copy of his shorthand notes to a foreign German-language anti-Nazi newspaper in order to expose Himmler and the S.S.—which would have been impossible inside Germany. Alas, when the speech was published[1] it was dismissed by foreign diplomats and in most Chancelleries as the attempt of an embittered refugee newspaper to discredit the Nazi régime and incite other countries to wage war as a means of removing the Nazis from power. Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry quickly denied the authenticity of the speech—a denial which was all too readily accepted in quarters which should have known better, but which had pinned the flag of appeasement to their masts.

Himmler began his review in measured tones, his manner of speech contrasting agreeably with the hysterical explosions to which Adolf Hitler had previously subjected the same audience. The generals listened politely and at first suppressed a smile when, from the lips of the Reichsfuehrer himself, they heard of his ceaseless endeavours to find suitable candidates for the S.S., of the standards which he applied in deciding on admission of candidates and volunteers to the ranks of his Black Guards. "I have refused to accept," Himmler said, "any man whose size was below six feet because I know that only men of a certain size have the necessary quality of blood. . . . I have also," he continued, "personally inspected the photographs of every single S.S. candidate and carefully considered whether there were any signs of foreign blood—such as high cheek-bones or any other unmistakable indications of Slav or Mongolian descent. . . ." Some of the generals glanced in the direction of one of the outstanding German Army leaders, General Heinz Guderian, the tank expert who finally became Hitler's chief of staff. Guderian's high cheek-bones seemed to betray his "inferior race" and the Slav blood in his veins. But there were many other generals from East Prussia where German and Polish blood freely intermingled, others among whose ancestors were Jugoslavs, Hungarians, Czechs—the sons of unions between German aristocrats and equally aristocratic mothers from the former non-German provinces of the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Did Himmler regard them as inferior, too, some of them wondered.

But Himmler was already off to a boastful description of the

[1] *Neuer Vorwaerts*, Karlsbad, 26 September, 1937.

current S.S. strength. The "General" S.S. comprised nearly two hundred thousand members, and the hard core of professionals enrolled in the *Verfuegungstruppe* (Emergency Units) included a much-expanded *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*, mechanized, equipped with artillery weapons, also trained as infantry soldiers, military all-rounders, supported by several subsidiary companies which were grouped around the regiment. It was the same with "Germania" and "Deutschland," the other two S.S. regiments whose units were spread out in concentric circles around the Hamburg and Munich depots. Looking anxiously for signs of recognition among his listeners, Himmler enumerated many other Standarten units—the S.S. pioneers, signallers, infantrymen. Proudly he spoke of his Death Head Brigades and of the concentration camps, which he justified by revealing to the generals that he had gathered much information about the revolutionary preparations of Moscow-trained Communists. To the generals, who had often been told that the Communist menace had long been eliminated from the political life of Germany, he confided a secret, carefully kept from the German people, that as recently as 1936 the S.S. had twice in succession raided illegal Communist headquarters and arrested Communist leaders, whose activities Moscow had financed to the extent of thirteen million gold marks. "In unison with the Fuehrer," he emphasized, "I have decided to keep these Communists behind the barbed wire of my concentration camps, together with the human dregs which we have fished out from the sewers of criminality, incredible criminal types whose very existence confirms our racial principles and the necessity to apply them rigorously."

Using the opportunity to expound some of the views which he had formed on related subjects, Himmler surprised the generals by discoursing at some length on German justice and explaining a new principle on which he had ordered his police to act. According to the Chief of the German Police, it was far more economical to keep a thief permanently behind lock and key than to allow him to roam about and, for instance, steal motor-cars: "Have you any idea, gentlemen," he asked naïvely, "how much it costs us to pursue a man who has stolen a motor-car? If you want to keep an eye on a criminal you need five paid officials, two motor-cars, and you still have no guarantee that you will succeed." His excursion into the subject of German justice, as he understood it, ended with the conclusion: "The State cannot afford to supervise tens of thousands of potential criminals at such expense and waste millions of marks —as is sometimes suggested by people afflicted with a humanitarian hangover. We have put these people into concentration camps." After the war many German generals expressed their horror at the conditions in concentration camps. "We never knew what went on in Dachau, Buchenwald or Mauthausen . . ." they said. They

admitted to knowing about the camps only what Himmler told them. Their version followed the description to which they were treated on this occasion. "The education in the camps," Himmler said, "is based on scrupulous order. Inmates have to take off their caps when they meet a guard, but are, of course, not allowed to give the Hitler salute; when they march they must sing and whatever they do must be performed with strict Prussian discipline"—in short, at the double.

The camps, he added, are surrounded by electrified barbed wire and he had ordered the guards to shoot at any prisoner moving towards a forbidden zone. "If any of them is cheeky or obstreperous, he is punished with solitary confinement on a water and bread ration. All I have done is to reintroduce the old Prussian prison discipline of 1914—and naturally there is a provision for corporal punishment of offenders. But cruelties, sadism such as has been mentioned in the foreign Press, do not exist. . . ." There was noticeable unrest among Himmler's audience when he explained this aspect of his preliminary work to prevent an outbreak of civil war in Germany. Himmler raised his voice: "I should like to make it quite clear that these measures are necessary—there is no other way of controlling these criminals. And in case of war it is quite evident that we shall have to rope in a much greater number of these types unless we want to risk highly unpleasant developments."

About the men who were guarding the concentration camps and their special rôle in times of war he said: "The Death Head Brigades will be the nucleus of a force of twenty-five thousand men who will guarantee the internal security of the Reich." They would operate hand in hand with the police, which would eventually have to include a majority of reliable S.S. men. The S.S. Emergency and Death Head units would fulfil police functions. Actually it never came to that, because Himmler's vision of the future and the war were wide of the mark of reality. "My aim is to turn the police into a force equal to any Army formation," he said in a challenging tone, which the generals could not misunderstand and which was a first hint that the S.S. might step into the shoes of the S.A. as a competitor of the Regular Army and that Himmler might emulate the late Ernst Roehm's military ambitions. Intoxicated by the sound of his own words and carried away by his emotions, but letting his words sink in, Himmler pronounced: "In a future war we shall not only have a front for the Army to fight on land, a front for the Navy at sea and a front for the Luftwaffe in the air, we shall have a fourth battle-front: Inner Germany! This is the base which we must retain strong and healthy, because otherwise the three other fronts are liable to be pierced by a stab in the back, as happened in the World War of 1914-18."

The generals were left in no doubt that the commander-in-chief on this dangerous front sector would be—Heinrich Himmler. They were shrewd enough to discover the inherent contradictions in Himmler's exposition, which consisted partly of a boast that he and the S.S. had made the Fatherland safe against the internal enemy and partly of an admission that the most extreme measures would still be necessary to guarantee internal security in Germany's most critical hour. Silently they heard him enumerating the four main features of his civil-war strategy, from which they gathered that the Reichsfuehrer S.S. was not even prepared to trust his own men. "I have made provisions for an emergency which consist of these points," he concluded. "First, no unit of the Death Head Brigade will serve in its own province: thus no Pomeranian S.S. man will serve in Pomerania; secondly, every unit will change its location every three weeks; thirdly, no single man will be allowed to engage in street combat or be asked to do duty as a solitary policeman—they will only be employed in full formation; fourthly, if there is occasion to act, the S.S. will act ruthlessly and relentlessly. This is the order which I have received from the Fuehrer. This is the strategy which I shall employ."

The generals rose slowly from their seats. When, seven years later, Himmler actually became Commander-in-Chief of Germany's home front it was under very different circumstances from those for which he had prepared and the problems which faced him were of a different order.

CHAPTER NINE

AUSTRIAN ADVENTURE

HIMMLER'S finger was in every pie. The annexation of Austria was his Fuehrer's next major objective and Himmler was entrusted with some aspects of Hitler's preparation for the move. At a "Day of the German Police" the Reichsfuehrer S.S. railed and ranted against the "last remaining symptoms of rottenness in the life of the nation," and though nobody understood what he meant his intimates knew that he was referring to some specific forthcoming action. This action was directed against the generals. When they had listened to Himmler's address on "Battle Front Inner Germany" they had hardly guessed that this lurid description of the power of the S.S. was designed as a warning to them. When leading officers like Generals Beck, Blomberg and Fritsch opposed Hitler's plan to march into Austria they could not have anticipated the manner and methods by which Himmler and his collaborators would break their resistance. Hitler had bluntly told the Reichswehr generals that he had decided to annex Austria. They, in turn, had not left him in doubt about their view that they regarded the Army as unprepared for a major conflagration such as might easily result from his move against the small republic. They had clearly hinted that their opposition might take a very active form.

Himmler's task in this contingency was two-fold. When Hitler and Goering agreed that the incipient Army revolt should be broken by a fatal blow at the head of the Reichswehr, they demanded the assistance of the Gestapo. To remove the brain behind the Army's opposition in the person of General Werner von Fritsch, Chief of the General Staff, Heydrich's department was ordered to produce a set of incriminating documents which purported to prove the general's implication in an unsavoury affair. To prepare the ground Himmler had once more publicly raved against homosexuals and declared that they could expect no mercy in the new Germany. Now, with the help of Heydrich's documents, Hitler and Goering threatened to unmask General von Fritsch as a homosexual unless he handed in his resignation. (The documents were forgeries adapted from files referring to a subaltern Army officer by the name of Frisch.) A similar manoeuvre enabled them to remove Defence Minister General Werner von Blomberg, whose

young wife, according to the files of the Gestapo, could at any time be exposed as a former prostitute. Hitler, condescendingly, offered to spare the Army the embarrassment of a public scandal if the two generals would resign and their colleagues abandon their opposition to the attack on Austria. They had no alternative but to submit.

The sordid manoeuvre having been successfully accomplished, Himmler could devote himself to the "security problems" arising out of the portentous Hitler plan. The S.S. civil-war army was alerted in case a few obstinate generals should call on their troops to resist Hitler's request after all. The Austrian section of Heydrich's foreign department was ordered to move into action. The leader of Austria's illegal S.S., Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, was entrusted with all measures concerning "security" in his home country so that, at a given signal, his S.S. units could take control of the streets and his allies in the Austrian police could strike against the patriotic anti-Nazi elements. Himmler himself would take charge once Hitler and Goering had completed the political preparations.

The story of how Hitler called Austria's Chancellor, Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg, to Berchtesgaden and bullied him into surrender of important concessions in Austria, how Schuschnigg called, in vain, on the Western ambassadors to enlist French and British help against Hitler, how, in despair, he organized a plebiscite to prove Austria's determination to remain independent, and how Hitler reacted by ordering the Reichswehr to march into Austria, has often been told. The rôle of the Austrian Quisling, Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart, has been analysed in detail, and his appeal to Hitler to send German troops to help maintain law and order in Austria has been exposed as one of recent history's greatest frauds. Heydrich had long recruited faithful friends in Austria, fifth-columnists in every department of State and public life. Dr. Schuschnigg's private secretary was a secret S.S. man, as were high-ranking police officers, civil servants, industrialists, business men. The "Trojan Horse" technique which Heydrich and young Walter Schellenberg had perfected paid handsome dividends. On 11 March, 1938, Austria, whose power of resistance had been undermined by Nazi infiltrations, fell like a ripe apple into Hitler's hands. On the instructions of Goering, who took charge of the political mechanics of the Anschluss, Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner was appointed Austrian Minister of Security in the short-lived Nazi Cabinet under "Chancellor" Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart. His first act was to arrest Dr. Schuschnigg along with thousands of other patriotic Austrian leaders.

As strong Reichswehr units marched on Austria, Heinrich Himmler set out on the greatest adventure of his career. The

eleventh of March, day of the invasion of Austria, was only a few minutes old when Himmler exchanged the black coat of the Reichsfuehrer for a new field-grey S.S. uniform, specially designed for the occasion. He looked a very martial figure. Two hand-grenades dangled from his Sam Browne belt when he left his office for the courtyard of the Prinz Albrechtstrasse Palace to review a special commando of twenty-eight men selected to accompany him. Karl Wolff was with him, also armed to the teeth with hand-grenades and revolvers, while the commandos carried tommy-guns and light machine-guns. Himmler's personal bodyguard, Police-sergeant Josef Kirmaier, was there with orders, whatever happened, not to move farther than two steps from the Reichsfuehrer.

From Berlin the formidable party flew first to Munich to await the latest news of developments in Vienna. By 3 a.m. signals from Vienna and Berlin suggested that the coast was clear. Tense, silent, excited, Himmler and his men proceeded to Vienna in two big aircraft. As they left the planes on Aspern Aerodrome, on the outskirts of Vienna, at 4.30 a.m., every man in the group had his hand on a gun. Himmler himself played nervously with a hand-grenade when he saw a formation of uniformed Austrian police facing him. But the Austrian police company was under the personal command of Police President Dr. Otto Skubl, who had been warned of the arrival of the sinister visitor and had come to offer him protection. A formal salute—and without any opportunity of using their arsenal of weapons, Heinrich Himmler and his band, in a long cavalcade of motor-cars, sped through the night to the Ballhausplatz Chancellery, where the last act of the Austrian drama was being played out. Though Himmler was the only member of the German Cabinet to be present—the lion in the rabbit's den—his part in the final negotiations was small. Goering, over the telephone from Berlin; General Muff, the German Military Attaché in Vienna: Dr. Seyss-Inquart; the ageing President Wilhelm Micklas of Austria; Wilhelm Keppler, Goering's Secretary of State, were the principal actors. Himmler's activities were confined to consultations with Dr. Kaltenbrunner and another Austrian S.S. leader, Otto Globocnik, a violent, alcoholic thug who in 1941 became known as the "butcher of Lublin."

The following day the Austrian S.S., as "auxiliary police," was let loose on the people of Austria. Under Kaltenbrunner and Globocnik they began a campaign of atrocities outstripping in its ferocity anything that had previously happened in Nazi Germany. Already on the evening of 11 March, and during the following days, Vienna could watch the S.S. supermen happily releasing all their inhibitions in a wild orgy directed against the Austrian Jews. On every street corner clusters of Jews were on their knees in the gutter sweeping the streets while the S.S. stood guard over them.

In S.S. garages Jews were burning their fingers in acid with which the S.S. forced them to clean their cars and lorries. Jewish university professors, scientists, doctors, lawyers, civil servants, highly decorated officers who had fought side by side with the German Army in the First World War, were subjected to indescribable indignities. Hundreds of others escaped a similar fate by taking their lives in a mounting wave of suicides. In the Hotel Metropole, which Himmler had taken over as headquarters of the Gestapo, Jewish women were forced to clean the S.S. latrines with their bare hands while gangs of jeering black-uniformed S.S. hooligans ill-treated them. The cells of the police prison were soon overcrowded with patriotic anti-Nazi Austrians.

The Austrian S.S. were at once rewarded for their "exemplary behaviour in the hours of their country's liberation." Himmler created a new S.S. regiment to be called "Der Fuehrer." To the Hotel Metropole Kaltenbrunner eventually transferred his two star prisoners, Chancellor Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg and Austria's most prominent Jew, Baron Louis von Rothschild. They were taken to the fifth floor, each locked into a separate room in the servants' quarters. Among "important prisoners" held downstairs was one Dr. Leopold Figl, Secretary of the Catholic Farmers' Association, and, like Schuschnigg, an inveterate anti-Nazi. Dr. Schuschnigg, who is extremely short-sighted, was deprived of his glasses and could hardly see. Baron Rothschild was denied the use of a razor, and after a few days the finely chiselled features of the good-looking man in his fifties were obscured by the stubbles of his beard. In this condition both men had already been forced to face a photographer of Guenther d'Alquen's *Das Schwarze Korps*, which scooped the German Press by publishing their pictures as an example of the "criminal appearance of the Austrian enemies of National Socialist Germany." Himmler praised d'Alquen for his enterprise and decided to inspect his prisoners personally. "I want to see these people," he told Wolff, who called on S.S. Standartenfuehrer Huber, a traitorous Austrian police officer, to conduct the Reichsfuehrer S.S. on his visit.

Ten years later, after he left an allied prison, Karl Wolff gave an account of this "historic meeting" between the prisoners and their captor. Not since the Middle Ages, which served Himmler as a pattern for his behaviour, had a statesman gone out of his way to humiliate his defeated enemies in such a manner. Himmler, revealing to his own subordinates a significant change in his attitude, frankly gloated over and gloried in the occasion. "I shall be humane with them . . ." he told Wolff, who had previously often accompanied his chief on visits to concentration camps. There might have been some justification for Himmler's visits to concentration camps. No obvious useful purpose could be served by the visit he was

about to make now. Yet irresistibly he was drawn to the Hotel Metropole.

When Himmler and Wolff, accompanied by Huber, entered the first room, Rothschild, owner of one of Vienna's most magnificent palaces, rose from the bare camp-bed, the only piece of furniture in view. "You know who I am?" Himmler asked curtly. Rothschild nodded. "And you know why you are here?" Himmler's voice sounded harsh but betrayed a feeling of embarrassment as Rothschild's steady (and, incidentally, blue) eyes rested on him without any sign of emotion. "I think I know," he said calmly. "I am not conscious of any guilt . . . but I am a realist. I am a public figure . . . bearer of an interesting name." There was the hint of a smile as he continued: "I assume that my problem will be settled from outside." Baron Rothschild was aware of the possibility that Himmler might be prepared to exchange him for a fat share of the great Rothschild fortune. The assets of the Austrian Rothschilds, however, were controlled by the British members of the family, and as such beyond the grasp of Himmler. "I shall await developments," Louis Rothschild added. "I have an easy conscience. . . ."

Himmler looked disappointed, as if he had been deprived of a great sensation. He had expected his prisoner to grovel in despair. The show of unruffled dignity perturbed him. "Any wishes . . ." he snarled, in the hope of extracting a request from Rothschild which might enable him to show himself in a merciful mood. "I have no wishes. . . ." Himmler was anxious to drag out the conversation and, searching for a topic which might conceivably produce some personal satisfaction for him, pressed Rothschild farther: "Your health . . . your food . . . is everything all right?" "The food is simple but adequate," said Rothschild. "I have no complaint." Himmler had drawn another blank. But his face lit up when, inadvertently, his prisoner fell into his trap. "I have toothache," said Baron Rothschild eventually. "Could I see a dentist?" "Granted," Himmler said triumphantly, turned on his heel and left.

His conversation with Dr. Schuschnigg was conducted on similar lines. When Dr. Schuschnigg complained that his glasses had been taken from him, and casually mentioned that Himmler, being short-sighted himself, would probably appreciate the inconvenience, the Reichsfuehrer felt insulted by this reference to his physical shortcoming. He made no reply—and Schuschnigg remained without his glasses. But he insisted on the Austrian Chancellor accompanying him on an inspection of the lavatory: he found it dirty and dilapidated. Himmler had been instrumental in destroying a country; the Chancellor of Austria was his personal prisoner. He had not even accorded him the privilege of honourable detention in civilized surroundings. But he was not going to tolerate dirt in the

lavatory. "Huber," he said, "I order that this lavatory be redecorated. . . ." With glee he went into details and asked that a modern flush be installed immediately. "I want it to be equipped with a cover," he said. And to introduce further changes, he demanded with a sweeping gesture that the field beds be replaced by wooden bedsteads. "There is no need to deprive these men of forks and knives," he later told Huber, who had allowed the prisoners only a spoon. "And," Wolff recounted, to show how much the care of the prisoners was on Himmler's mind, "he gave instructions that their food be tasted by Huber himself before they were allowed to consume it." Wolff made it appear that Himmler was concerned with Baron Rothschild's health. "I cannot guarantee," he quoted Himmler saying to him, "that one of my boys, in his just rage against the leader of the Austrian Jews, might not try to poison Rothschild." He was only worried lest the rash act of a Nazi youngster who had taken his theories too seriously might kill Rothschild and thus deprive him of a huge ransom—which was later actually paid. "You, Huber, will pay with your head if these men should be given marching powder. . . ." Almost automatically Himmler used the popular S.S. term for the poison with which they had a habit of sending their victims "on the march" to another world.

After the visit Himmler was perturbed. Rothschild, he admitted to Wolff, had by no means the features of a "Jewish Criminal"; he seemed to be the exception to the physionomical rule which he had laid down and in which he believed implicitly. To compensate himself for the disappointing encounter with the living Austrian Chancellor he turned his attention to the dead predecessor of Schuschnigg, Dr. Engelbert Dollfuss, whom his men had murdered in 1934. Dropping all previous pretence, he visited the graves of the murderers, who had been executed for their crime, and decorated them with a wreath of flowers arranged in the pattern of the S.S. runes.

Dr. von Schuschnigg lived to describe his martyrdom. In the treason trial in 1947 against his own Foreign Secretary, Dr. Guido Schmidt—who was, however, acquitted—he told the court that he was transferred from the Hotel Metropole to Munich Police Prison in October, 1939, kept there in solitary confinement until December, 1941, sent with his family to Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1941, and held there until his removal to Flossenburg camp (until February, 1945), and finally to Niederdorf, where he was liberated.

Among Vienna's population were two hundred thousand Jews. They aggravated Himmler's preoccupation with the racial question. As thousands of refugees rushed towards the frontier, Goering gave orders that no Jew leaving the country should be allowed to take

any money with him. Here was an opportunity of making organized anti-semitism pay. At the same time Himmler suggested that negotiations be initiated with American Jewish organizations to enable Austrian Jews to settle abroad. When the American Press denounced the S.S. atrocities against the Jews, Himmler said: "If the Americans pay the fare and look after them we shall gladly let them go. . . ." In 1945, when he tried to offer himself to the Western Allies as a peacemaker, Himmler stressed this incident. "All I planned to do," he told whoever was prepared to listen and likely to convey his words to the victorious Allies, "was to clear Germany of the Jews. I did not mean to do them any harm." The negotiations did not progress far. The United States, Britain, France, Italy, Austria's other neighbours, provided refuge for many thousands of Jews who were able to escape the clutches of Himmler's S.S. Many more, however, without any money and unable to leave the country, were transported to concentration camps, chiefly to Buchenwald, near Weimar, where they joined large contingents of Austrian Catholics and Socialists. So big was the haul of Austrian prisoners that Himmler hurriedly approved plans for a new camp to be established at Mauthausen, in Upper Austria. It became one of the worst.

Daily now, in Vienna and other Austrian cities, columns of prisoners were being pushed and beaten by S.S. guards as they marched to the railway stations to be pressed, eighty or a hundred per wagon, into cattle trucks on their way to the camps. Austrians, who were beginning to awake from the hypnotic spell under which Hitler's short visit to his homeland had cast them, cheered the prisoners and, wherever possible, gave them food and comforts to take on the weary journey to modern hell. So fierce was the Austrian S.S., so harsh the treatment which they meted out to the Jews, that not a few of them, in their despair, sought safety by escaping—into Germany, where the Jewish problem did not seem to be so acute. In these days it was indeed safer for a Jew to be at the centre of Himmler's campaign than on the Austrian fringe, where blood flowed freely. But Himmler was driving towards another stage of the "solution" of the Jewish problem in the whole of the Reich. *Das Schwarze Korps* published a demand to make Race Shame, the consorting of Jews with Aryans—even in marriage—punishable by death. Heydrich, whom Himmler ordered to intensify the campaign against the Jews, was constantly on the look-out for new pretexts to strike another blow at Jewry.

In Nuremberg, Julius Streicher, fully aware that Himmler had given the signal for a "sharper course," did not even bother to look for pretexts. From Dresden he had received the news that an S.S. platoon had raided a Jewish prayer-house during the evening service, arrested twenty-five worshippers and torn the holy insignia

and emblems from their head-covering, worn while praying. At once he decided to emulate their splendid example and, if possible, to make a better job of it. On 4 August, 1938, together with Mayor Liebel of Nuremberg, he called a Press conference and asked the reporters to hold themselves prepared to attend the breaking up of the Nuremberg Synagogue. "Nuremberg Synagogue will be destroyed," he declared. The minutes of his Press conference were found after the war. They give a good idea of the methodical way in which Himmler's campaign was carried out. "Regards Breaking up of Synagogue," says the document, and adds: "(Information must still be regarded as secret.) On 10 August, 1938, the break-up of the synagogue will commence. Gauleiter Julius Streicher will personally set the crane in motion with which the Jewish symbols, Star of David, *et cetera,* will be torn down. This should be arranged in a big way. . . ." On 11 August, Nuremberg newspapers published a report of the event. "In Nuremberg the synagogue is being demolished," breathless reporters told their readers. "Julius Streicher himself inaugurates the work by a speech lasting more than an hour and a half. By his order then—so to speak as a prelude of the demolition—the tremendous Star of David came off the cupola. . . ."

Streicher's idea caught on among Gauleiters and S.S. leaders throughout the country. But this haphazard way of destroying synagogues was not to the liking of Heydrich, who envisaged one great sweeping action to accomplish Himmler's aim. An opportunity presented itself on 9 November, 1938, when the assembled Nazi leaders at their annual gathering in Munich received the news that a Jewish refugee, Herschel Grynspan, had made an attempt on the life of a junior Nazi diplomat, Herr Ernst von Rath, secretary of the German Embassy in Paris. Goebbels made an impassioned speech and demanded that the German Jews should pay for the crime of their co-religionist. He urged Himmler to help him in organizing a gigantic country-wide mass demonstration against the Jews, and Himmler at once called Heydrich in Berlin and issued instructions to set the machinery of the Nazi terror in motion. There has never before been anything quite like the orders which—instigator of unrest and guardian of public order in one person—Heydrich circulated to the German police:

"Because of the attempt on the life of the Secretary of the Legation, von Rath, in Paris tonight, 9-10 November, 1938," the order said, "demonstrations against Jews are to be expected throughout the Reich. The following instructions are given on how to treat these events:

"(1) The Chiefs of the State Police or their deputies must get in telephonic contact with the political leaders who have jurisdiction over their districts and must arrange a joint meeting with the appro-

priate inspector or commander of the Order Police to discuss the organization of the demonstrations. At these discussions the political leaders have to be informed that the German Police has received from the Reichsfuehrer S.S. and Chief of the German Police the following instructions, in accordance with which the political leaders should adjust their own measures.

"(*a*) Only such measures should be taken which do not involve danger to German life or property. (For instance, synagogues are to be burned down only when there is no danger of fire to the surroundings.)

"(*b*) Business and private apartments of Jews may be destroyed but not looted. The police are instructed to supervise the execution of this order and to arrest looters."

The technique was simple. Dr. Goebbels, through his propaganda organization and the branches of the Party, had issued instructions for the "spontaneous demonstrations." The S.S. and police, by order of Himmler and Heydrich, protected the demonstrators where they did not help them actively. A few hours later hundreds of synagogues were burning, thousands of German shops were being destroyed and looted—the S.S. joining happily in the profitable outburst of the German people's just indignation. But the vandalism which soon enveloped Aryan shops and stores, together with the Jewish targets—the plate-glass broken in Berlin alone amounted to half the yearly glass imports for the whole of Germany—was only the signal for further action. After a sleepless night, Heydrich called his secretary to dictate a further set of instructions as follows:

"As soon as the course of events of this night allows the use of the officials employed for this purpose, as many Jews, especially rich ones, as can be accommodated in the existing prisons are to be arrested in all districts. For the time being only healthy men, not too old, are to be arrested. Upon their arrest the appropriate concentration camps should be contacted immediately, in order to confine them in these camps as fast as possible. . . ."

A fine of a billion marks was imposed on the Jewish community, virtually dispossessing it of what assets it had retained over the years of persecution, boycotts, slow economic strangulation and blackmail. But a further three months elapsed before the world had a glimpse of things to come, although the imagination of civilized people could not as yet embrace the horrific prospect. On 30 January, 1939, when the decision to attack Poland had already been taken, Hitler, looking in advance for a whipping boy on whom to blame the outbreak of war, went to the microphone to announce solemnly: "If the international Jewish financiers within and without Europe succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, the result will not be . . . the victory of Jewry, but the obliteration of the Jewish race in Europe." Himmler held his breath as

he heard his Fuehrer's threat. The obliteration of the Jews had become one of the "historic tasks" which he had set himself. Expectantly he went on another tour of inspection of his concentration camps, which were almost bursting their barbed-wire, so thickly crammed were they with the victims of his mania.

His appetite for international excursions whetted by his Austrian success, he paid his annual visit to Italy but returned to Berlin without delivering his customary eulogy of the Italian Police. The Rome–Berlin Axis was already in being, Italy was a potential ally in the war, and he regarded the Italian internal security very much as a matter for his concern. Frankly, he told Hitler, he did not think that Mussolini and his police minister were really capable of organizing their police as efficiently as circumstances might require. With the help of Daluege he worked out a set of "suggestions" which, he thought, should be handed to Mussolini with a view to assisting him in a reorganization of the Italian Police. Hitler congratulated his lieutenant on his ideas, but would not as yet risk insulting his Axis partner with such interference in Italy's internal affairs. The Duce never saw Himmler's elaborate memorandum.

Undeterred by his failure to ensnare the Italian Police, Himmler looked out for another Italian opening and found it when Professor Guido Landra, chief of the Race Political Office in the Italian Ministry for Popular Culture, visited him in Berlin. The Reichsfuehrer received Professor Landra with honours usually reserved for the head of a state. Proudly he took him on an inspection of the *Leibstandarte*, "this unique unit," he explained, "specially selected in conformity with the best racial standards." For days he lectured Landra about problems of race and the political conclusions arising from them. He was pleased to have found a foreigner who agreed with him on the most important topic in his life.

The Landra interlude was not the end of his excursions into foreign affairs. He invited General Zamorski, the chief of the Polish State Police, to Berlin, but, although the two men had much in common, failed to persuade his Polish opposite number to accept S.S. guidance. Although Zamorski returned his compliment by inviting him to a hunt in Poland—hitherto Goering's privilege—the Polish police minister came away from the interview deeply suspicious of Himmler's motives. Hitler was not prepared to reveal his real intentions beyond his claim to Danzig and the Polish Corridor. His admission to the German generals that, if necessary, he was determined to "destroy the Polish State" was still a state secret. Himmler, the amateur diplomat, had nearly given it away.

CHAPTER TEN

HIMMLER'S "HUMAN" RELATIONS

THE year 1939 should have been one of triumph for the German people. Austria had been brought "home into the Reich"—as the official version had it. "Munich" and the acquisition of the Sudetenland had been another bloodless victory of the régime. There seemed little doubt that the walls of Prague would equally easily collapse before the trumpeting of Hitler's speeches and Goebbels' propaganda, and that Poland, too, in spite of British and French guarantees, would crumple as soon as the Fuehrer gave the signal. Yet the atmosphere in Germany was one of dull foreboding. There was no fear of war, which most Germans were still convinced Hitler would ingeniously avoid. But rumours of a "stronger course" were fed by evidence of a general tightening up on the home front. The gradual disappearance of the Jews, though there was little sympathy for them, led people dimly to suspect that in the Germany of 1939 what happened to the Jews could happen to anybody. Red posters announcing sentences of death for high treason were on many hoardings, and it was no longer a joke what a German whispered into the ear of a foreigner: "You are lucky," he said, "if there is a knock at your door in the morning, you know it is the milkman. . . ."

In Germany it was the Gestapo who knocked at every door. Heydrich's agents roamed the country investigating—not with any particular object in view, but to find out what might be, making house searches without any pretext, taking men and women away for questioning, sometimes acting on information, but more often picking their victims indiscriminately from among "potential offenders." A feeling of insecurity pervaded the country and was by no means confined to people with bad consciences—those who disliked the régime even if they did not dare to admit it. Conversations among Party members were hushed; any casual remark, many of them felt, any unguarded word might be "misunderstood" by the Security Service, which seemed to be all-present. But even Party members, had they known, would not have believed that the Security Service relied on no more than three thousand full-time officials, though each of them controlled a chain of information which laid every section of the population in bond.

So tense was the situation that a member of Goering's personal staff, who, in an official exchange of letters with Himmler's private office, had been forced to contradict the Reichsfuehrer on a minor point, bitterly complained that he was going in fear of his life and never knew when the S.S. would come to get him. . . . Hermann Goering himself, with a weak attempt at a joke, preceded every other sentence with a significant: "I hope you will not tell Himmler." Himmler, in fact, was being pressed by members of his Staff to act against Goering, whose conduct, the Reichsfuehrer was told, was endangering the morale of the people. His extravagance in times of austerity was a provocation. Had not Himmler promised to act ruthlessly against drones inside the Party, and had he not ordered the Security Service specifically to bring abuses to his notice, even if they were committed in highest quarters? Himmler studied Goering's "File" for weeks, spent hours reading the information supplied by the Security Service. "You must put it before the Fuehrer!" Karl Wolff pressed him. "I cannot do that," was Himmler's reply. "I have sworn that I shall remain Goering's loyal comrade. . . ." He did not do anything. But an abrupt, harsh tone crept into his somewhat high-pitched voice whenever the name of Goering was mentioned. When he was told that Emmy Goering's secretary was on the telephone seeking permission for Frau Goering to show a Swedish friend round a concentration camp—her intention was to disprove "atrocity stories"—Himmler brusquely took the receiver and replied: "Tell Frau Goering not to interfere! My wife has never asked to inspect Luftwaffe rest-homes. . . ."

Soon Himmler's desk was covered with files containing information about every Nazi leader. The drunken excesses of Robert Ley, leader of the Labour Front; Joseph Goebbels's amorous adventures; the rivalry between Rudolf Hess and Martin Bormann, who worked for him at Party headquarters . . . no Gauleiter was safe from observation by one of Himmler's Security Service minions. The threads of the ever-widening net of supervision ran together in Himmler's hand. He knew everything, but if his knowledge did not fortify him it enhanced his prestige and strengthened his position in the Party hierarchy. He was now recognized as one of the leaders of the Party, his S.S. as a pillar of the régime's strength. He had developed his excellent memory for personalities and their circumstances, their private lives, hopes, fears and aspirations—even if he had never met them. In conversation with his Nazi colleagues he was often parading this unrivalled knowledge. Was it a threat? Was it just his vanity? His listeners could never be sure. Their reaction to him was one of mingled fear and respect for his mental filing system in which every item was in the right place, available at the right moment.

The tenth anniversary of his appointment as Reichsfuehrer S.S. was celebrated with a great flourish. Hitler received Heinrich Himmler at the Berghof in Berchtesgaden. Later his friends arranged a second ceremony at which his praise was sung by a number of Party and State dignitaries. While there was little evidence that Heinrich Himmler was using his position to amass a personal fortune—such as almost every one of his cabinet colleagues regarded as a suitable reward for his services to Party and State—he was even more susceptible than most of them to the public acknowledgement of his powerful position in the Reich. Hitler accepted power as a divine gift, Goering as a means to ensure a pleasant life. Goebbels gloried in the hold which he had obtained over the mind of the people and the influence which his speeches and writings exercised beyond the German frontiers. Himmler enjoyed power—his closest friends argue—as a perverse, physical pleasure. But he also craved power for the day when there would be war, the "inevitable, natural, necessary testing time of men," which he was convinced would not now be long delayed. He and Heydrich often discussed the possibility, saw themselves already as generals leading their incomparable S.S. troops into battle, taking the field very much in the manner of the medieval overlords on which they tried to model themselves. Heydrich, at least, eventually satisfied this craving. When it was Himmler's turn to go to war it was a sorry excursion.

The interviews with Hitler convinced Himmler of the need to prepare more actively for the coming conflict. Hitler unhesitatingly granted his request that the S.S. be allowed to go to the front and take part in the battle when the occasion arose. Himmler called on Sepp Dietrich of the *Leibstandarte* to make preparations for this contingency, to put the S.S. crack formation through a rigorous course of battle training and to pass his experience on to other S.S. units. Army co-operation was only grudgingly forthcoming, but Hitler made it clear to the Wehrmacht that his own S.S. regiment, about to be expanded to a full division, would have to be allocated a conspicuous sector of the fighting front. He gave orders that the *Leibstandarte* be issued with up-to-date equipment. It would have to become a fully mechanized unit, be the hard core of a new S.S. formation—the *Waffen* S.S. (Armed S.S.), units of which would be attached to every army in the field.

Himmler devoted himself fully to the military preparations for an S.S. Army while his *aides* tried to bring order into the chaos in which a rapid mushroom growth threatened to envelop the S.S. administration. It was reorganized, but remained so complicated that allied officials, charged with the prosecution of the S.S. as a criminal organization at Nuremberg, had to rely on half a dozen S.S. chiefs to prepare a correct diagram of its ramifications. There

was a *Reichssicherheits Hauptamt* (Reichs Security Main Office), R.S.H.A., for short; an Economic Department; a Medical and a Replacement Office; Security and Quartermaster Department; Gymnastics; Communications; General Services offices. There was also the Race Office, a Justice Department for S.S. offenders. Acting for Himmler, as his most influential administrative officer of the S.S. organization, was his great friend Karl Wolff, now already invested with the top S.S. rank, that of an Obergruppenfuehrer (Upper Group Leader). A tall, blond, aloof but competent ex-officer, Wolff was chief adjutant and in charge of Himmler's highly secret (and most incriminating) correspondence. In addition, attached to him were numerous Security and Order Police A.D.C.s; he dealt with requests for financial aid to needy S.S. officers and men—and that had long come to include appointments to remunerative directorships of firms which, for instance, relied to a large extent on slave labour from the concentration camps. Wolff also controlled the Wewelsburg through an administrative officer and acted on behalf of Himmler in all matters dealing with *Lebensborn* and *Ahnenerbe*. He had a special staff to maintain liaison with Goering's Four-year Plan organization, the highest economic authority in the land. And, to please his chief, he also took the extensive, country-wide work of excavations—the search for Himmler's Germanic relics—under his personal wing.

Once every week Himmler would take the chair at a full meeting of his departmental chiefs, who represented the greatest accumulation of power in the Reich. There was, for instance, Heinrich Mueller, S.S. Group Leader in charge of AMT IV (Office 4), the official description of the Secret State Police—the Gestapo. Even few Germans were aware that Mueller's department fulfilled many functions not popularly associated with the Gestapo, but as time went on they recognized the sinister implications of each Gestapo subdivision: A.1 (dealing with Leftist and Rightist opposition); A.2 (anti-sabotage operations); A.3 (counter intelligence); A.4 (Jews, churches); A.5 (special assignments); A.6 (protective custody). Later "B" branches were added for the occupied western, eastern and south-eastern territories for questions regarding the employment of foreign workers, customs and border protection and inspections.

There was Gottlob Berger, in charge of the S.S. Main Office; Adolf Hoffmann, who took over control of the Race and Settlement Office from Darre. Heydrich (Security Service) and Daluege (Order Police) were, of course, Himmler's almost inseparable companions. One happy family!—one might have thought, these new masters of Germany. Yet these men were often at each other's throat; almost came to blows, Wolff told me, when a little later the key position of a personnel chief became vacant and each of

them was determined to manoeuvre his own candidate into this important post. Some of Himmler's *aides* were for co-operation with the Regular Army, others were planning to supersede it. Wolff said his ambition was that the S.S. should emulate the Army, and for that purpose he recruited as many Army officers as possible for the S.S. force. One of them eventually, Colonel von Herff, was appointed Chief of Personnel on Wolff's recommendation. But Sepp Dietrich remained Himmler's trusted military adviser.

One of the problems which war would bring, it was clear to Himmler and his friends, was the care of the German minorities in foreign countries, some of whom, Himmler decided early, it would be wiser to bring home to the Reich to remove them from the dangerous influence of their compatriots. Only thus could they be subjected to a rigorous Nazi education. Two offices were created to deal with them—a *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* (National German Central Office) and an office for *Festigung des deutschen Volkstums* (Strengthening of German Folkdom). Both offices were, somewhat incongruously, incorporated into the biggest department of the organization, the W.V.H.A. (Economic and Administrative Main Office), under Group Leader Oswald Pohl, who ruled supreme over all financial and economic matters. Pohl's department dealt with pay for officers and men alike, provided funds for the extensive S.S. building programme and for the purchase of raw materials. Although, strictly speaking, concentration camps were the responsibility of the Death Head Brigades, Pohl assumed control over them when they became one of the main sources of income for the S.S.

Early in 1951 there was still controversy around Oswald Pohl. A death sentence, passed on him in 1947, had not been carried out, and resurgent German nationalism rallied, as usual, around the worst cause it could possibly defend—Pohl's life. He was eventually and belatedly hanged long after the German people had forgotten that, in the S.S. as elsewhere, the man who paid the piper called the tune. That man, particularly after Heydrich's death, was Oswald Pohl. Bald and bullet-headed, small, squat, abrupt and dictatorial in his manner, he soon qualified for the nickname "Mussolini," by which he was known in the S.S. A good administrator after the S.S. fashion, Pohl amassed a fortune for the Black Guard organization and, since he was always able to meet Himmler's requests for funds for the most extraordinary projects, became one of the Reichsfuehrer's favourites.

Pohl was a sadist, said Wolff, when we discussed the scenes which accompanied the S.S. leader's visits to concentration camps, where he was fond of watching punishment parades, and waited patiently while prisoners hanging from hooks or strapped to blocks writhed in pain. "No, it was a purely commercial interest which

lured Pohl so frequently to the camps," said another S.S. survivor. He explained that Pohl was the moving spirit behind the vast concentration-camp industry, who, at first, used the prisoners to make the camps self-supporting and to turn them into profitable business ventures. When manpower became short in the Reich, and both the Army and the S.S. made ever bigger calls on the youth of Germany, Pohl ordered all concentration-camp prisoners to be hired out as slave labourers for German industry—Herr von Krupp was one of the industrialists indicted for the exploitation of slave labourers, many of whom perished. Later this slave army was strengthened by millions of foreign workers forcibly imported into wartime Germany. But even before the war his slave-driver practice developed catastrophic varieties. Concentration-camp commandants, in the atmosphere of chaos, corruption and cross-purposes which attended their activities, were not only concerned with reducing the cost of the camps' maintenance, but anxious to line their own pockets and to live in luxury at the prisoners' expense. Pocketing a large share of the payment for the inmates' labour, they robbed Pohl of part of the profits. Prisoners lived on starvation rations, and when their output dropped owing to their physical condition were forced to work excruciatingly long hours. Camp commandants drew rations for prisoners long dead. To the living they issued not even half of what they drew, and sold the "surplus." The prisoners died like flies.

This is not the place to describe the horrible tortures to which prisoners were subjected from the guards, men of low standards whose mental balance had become completely upset by the power which they wielded over the life and death of the camp inmates. They caused a terrible havoc. Tens of thousands died because the guards implemented Himmler's philosophy, according to which the prisoners were sub-human and not deserving of human considerations. But even before "extermination" became calculated, official S.S. policy, the debacle which befell hundreds of thousands of Jews, gipsies, Poles, Russians and prisoners of a dozen other nationalities, must be directly ascribed to the inhuman greed with which they were exploited on Pohl's orders. While he wanted to make use of them, he also soon began to regard them as expendable. Once work had reduced them to physical wrecks, it was cheaper to let them die than to maintain them, even on a thin vegetable soup and the black bread which were their only sustenance. One hint to the Gestapo and thousands of new victims could be roped in to feed the Nazi labour market and—inevitably—the crematoria of the concentration camps. Already in 1938 and 1939 the death-rate in concentration camps was so great that Pohl was able to make a profit even from the corpses. The clothes of the prisoners, their personal property, even their gold teeth, became

valuable S.S. assets, With a final total of nearly ten million victims, Pohl's turnover was gigantic, S.S. financial fortunes prospered and Himmler controlled virtually unlimited economic resources.

The work of such an efficient administrator as Oswald Pohl left Himmler free to devote his mind to questions which war and conquest would soon pose with great urgency. At the Wewelsburg he assembled his S.S. leaders to lecture them on the new tasks which awaited them. He told them of Hitler's gracious consent to his request that the S.S. should be allowed to take part in the forthcoming battle and the Fuehrer's decision to invest S.S. leaders with military rank. His own rank of Reichsfuehrer would be the equivalent of a Wehrmacht field-marshal; every Obergruppenfuehrer would be a full general—and, since his duties were likely to include police functions, also a "Higher Police Leader." Police functions, in fact, were very much in Hitler's mind when he decided to recruit the S.S. for war service. Soon his armies would have conquered Poland—police and S.S. divisions, for which Himmler was responsible, would have to secure the occupied territory. There may remain, behind the lines of the Wehrmacht, remnants of the enemy armies, aided perhaps by desperadoes, patriotic Polish civilians and Jews determined to harry the German forces. Hitler had decided in advance, as Himmler now explained to the assembled S.S. leaders, that he would not regard such activities as acts of war, but simply as resistance and revolt to be dealt with on the lines of Himmler's civil-war strategy. "This war," Himmler said, "will largely be a police action and we are the police. . . ."

The Chief Policeman of the Reich, on the threshold of even greater power over life and death than he had hitherto wielded, was in a sorry physical state. Setzkorn, the masseur, was no longer able to relieve him of the pains of recurring stomach cramps; his scalp seemed to spout fire, his eyes hurt and his staff often found the Reichsfuehrer at his desk or on a couch in his office doubled up in pain and hysterical despair. Karl Wolff bore the brunt of his fits and regarded it as his duty to seek relief for his chief. An opportunity came when he heard about the successful treatment which another masseur, a certain Felix Kersten, had applied to similarly harassed wealthy German aristocrats, industrialists and business men, at a time when cramps were an occupational Nazi disease. Kersten was a Finnish subject who had long lived in Berlin and reaped the rich financial rewards which come to a man able to cure wealthy men of real or imagined maladies. Hysterics—and most of Kersten's "patients" were hysterics—are always given to exaggeration. Of Felix Kersten his patients said that his hands were "magnetic."

Wolff went to see Kersten and, after impressing on him the delicacy of his mission, the indispensable need for secrecy and the consequences of indiscretion—easy for an S.S. general—told him what

he knew about the physical condition of the Reichsfuehrer S.S. Would Herr Kersten take on Himmler as a patient? Many of the stories about Kersten and his relations with Himmler which are circulating in the world derive from a book[1] which Kersten wrote after Himmler's death. The American edition of the book contains an introduction by Konrad Heiden, famed anti-Nazi author, in which with unmistakable sarcasm he says: "Mr. Kersten has an immense opinion of the part he played. By his intervention he changed the destiny of nations—for the better, of course. He spoke up boldly to the tyrants. He enjoyed among them a relative liberty of movement and an absolute independence of spirit which are truly amazing. His phenomenal success in leading the Nazis by the nose would give the watchful Gestapo a very poor record—always according to his story."

And what a story Herr Kersten has to tell. He introduces himself as Doctor Felix Kersten, but does not explain why, since he came to Berlin in 1922 to study and to attend courses at the university, he only obtained his "diploma as practitioner of physiotherapy" at the age of forty-three at the same university in 1941—two years after he had become Himmler's masseur and closest confidant. "Heinrich Himmler," he says earnestly, "has been held personally responsible for the death of millions. I can claim that, as one of his personal physicians during the crucial years, I used my undoubted influence over him to reduce the number by thousands. . . ." Karl Wolff, who, like Kersten, was Himmler's confidant during the crucial years, has also insisted that he had nothing at all to do with the crimes laid at the door of his friend and chief. But he is credited with the—post-war—remark that Kersten may have served humanity better by reducing the number of living people by one—Heinrich Himmler. Kersten, of course, did nothing of the sort. But he avidly collected testimonials for the charitable work which he was able to perform in his exalted position—as, for instance, when Himmler, to make him a "Christmas present," spared the lives of two Swedish prisoners and allowed Kersten to take them out of the country. We shall see that in the final stages of the war there was a mad scramble among S.S. leaders to save and protect Jews and other anti-Nazis in the hope of currying favour with the Allies. From that scramble Kersten clearly emerged as the most successful of Himmler's associates and armed with a testimonial from Himmler himself, according to which he was never a Nazi.

Be that as it may, Kersten was an immediate success with Heinrich Himmler, who fondly called him "my little Buddha"—a reference to Kersten's rotund head and figure. Kersten, in turn, at once devoted himself to Himmler's head and figure. It was on 10 March,

[1] *The Memoirs of Doctor Felix Kersten* (Doubleday and Company, New York, 1947).

1939, that Kersten first met Heinrich Himmler—"that narrow-chested, weak-chinned, spectacled man with the ingratiating smile and almost owlishly innocent eyes," as he described him. He noted the books Himmler was reading, many of them on Heinrich I, others dealing with the Moslem religion, biographies of Mohammed and a German translation of the Koran, which was always by Himmler's bedside. Having thus completed a mental picture of his new patient, Kersten was surprised when Himmler greeted him in a high, shrill voice and with uncertain, somewhat affected gestures of his soft hands. A bookish mystic, a pedant, Kersten decided. A strange man —and a very sick man, was his instantaneous conclusion. On the basis of a highly confidential talk between doctor and patient, Kersten made his diagnosis; recurrent stomach cramps were the result of nerves weakened by a heavy case of previous typhoid fever. Himmler revealed that he had once suffered from a severe attack of dysentery and jaundice and, as a child, once had para-typhoid. He still had a bilious look, Kersten observed.

In Sachsenhausen concentration camp, not far from Himmler's office in Berlin, the death-rate of inmates was now an average of fifteen hundred per month. In Dachau concentration camp a new crematorium had just been completed to enable the S.S. to cope with the accumulation of bodies which it was impossible to bury. In a dozen other camps prisoners died under the blows of S.S. guards, others suffering from malnutrition and sores were left to rot in their bunks, left there even when they died because starving fellow-prisoners tried to prolong their own miserable lives for a few more days by drawing their dead comrades' ration. "What can you do to cure me of these recurrent crises of stomach spasm," Himmler humbly asked Kersten, "and deliver me from a perfect martyrdom? Help me!" he pleaded. Kersten describes how he turned back Himmler's shirt and went over the painful areas with his fingers. Himmler moaned a little, but afterwards said that Kersten's touch was "like balm." From that moment onwards for the next six years, while Himmler meted out death to millions, Kersten applied his balm to Himmler.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE S.S. STARTS THE WAR

KERSTEN'S treatment relieved Himmler of much pain, invigorated him and restored much of his old energy. But fear of a relapse hounded the Reichsfuehrer, who would not let the masseur from his side. He forced Kersten to attend many confidential conferences over which he presided and relied on his reassuring glance to halt an impending attack. Often Himmler, the hysteric, drew strength for far-reaching decisions only from Kersten's "magnetism." Rumours of his plans to colonize the east had leaked out and Hitler ordered him to retract his statements in a suitable public speech. Weakly Himmler scoffed at the idea that he was nurturing any Napoleonic notions, and said that "it is a lie that we want to eliminate other races or drive them from their living spaces. We have read history," he declared, "and know what happened to Napoleon. . . ." To show that he did not cast covetous eyes on the east, he went on a tour of inspection of the Siegfried Line in the west. He was accompanied by an old friend, Group Leader Eicke, who was destined to become the leader of a Death Head Brigade front-line unit attached to the Wehrmacht. General Franco, in gratitude for advice which he had received from Himmler's office on treatment of "Communists, brigands and partisans," invested him as "Knight of the Imperial Order of the Red Arrows." With Heydrich, a few days later, he sped to Prague, where the Reich Protector, Baron Konstantin von Neurath, was unable to cope with opposition and anti-German demonstrations of Czech university students. His visit was followed by a wave of arrests and executions which roused international ire, but were small incidents indeed compared with the repressive measures with which Himmler was later to become identified. Into Dachau now filed thousands of Czech youngsters to join Communists, homosexuals and professional criminals.

Hitler was fearful lest an agreement with Mussolini about the South Tyrol should result in violent opposition from the brave mountain people whom Nazi policy was about to sacrifice on the altar of the Rome–Berlin Axis. To reassure Mussolini that his demands for all Germans to be brought "home to the Reich"—in most instances together with the foreign territory which they in-

habited—would not apply to the South Tyrol, Hitler had ordered the Nazi Party branches inside Italy to be dissolved and two hundred thousand German South Tyroleans to be evacuated into Germany. Himmler's *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*, under S.S. Group Leader Lorenz, was charged with the execution of the plan, and South Tyroleans were the first of the unfortunate foreign Germans who were forced to give up their homes and farms and make a miserable trek to a Germany which was alien to them. Security Service men organized the mass removal, Gestapo agents screened the German emigrants. Hundreds of South Tyroleans who strongly expressed their objections to the Hitler–Mussolini arrangement at their expense were hurriedly returned to Germany—and straight into concentration camps.

In a speech to heavily armed units of the S.S., Himmler, for the first time, publicly acknowledged the German people's attitude towards his pretorian Black Guards. "I know that we are not much loved," Himmler told them proudly, "but what does it matter as long as we do our duty. . . ?" He was, he explained to friends, genuinely astonished that even the German people failed to acknowledge the historic mission of the S.S. And he professed himself completely baffled by the reputation which he had acquired abroad. A few months later, Ward Price, the British Correspondent, revealed that, in an interview, Himmler had naïvely asked him: "Why am I called a bloodhound?" But he linked his questions with the assertion that his S.S. formations were by now the most powerful fighting units ever to take the field. The *Leibstandarte* alone had grown to a strength of ten thousand fully trained modern troops.

As these units moved into position as part of the Wehrmacht, which was already poised to strike against Poland, Himmler and Heydrich discussed details of an order which they had received from Hitler. It was to stage an incident on the German–Polish frontier which could serve as a pretext for the beginning of the military operation. While Nazi public announcements concentrated on Danzig and the Polish Corridor, Heydrich prepared the plan for the incident. After the war the details were revealed by the man to whom Heydrich entrusted the execution on the spot. In its cool and business-like terms it deserves to be quoted without embellishment, just as it will go down in history—the Nazi formula on how to start a war. The speaker is Alfred Helmut Naujocks, member of the S.S. since 1931 and official of the Security Service since its inception. Here is what Naujocks said:[1]

"On or about 10 August, 1939, the Chief of the Sipo (Security Police) and S.D., Heydrich, personally ordered me to simulate an attack on the radio station near Gleiwitz, near the Polish border, and to make it appear that the attacking force consisted of Poles.

[1] *The Trial of the Major War-criminals at Nuremberg*, vol. IV.

Heydrich said: 'Actual proof of these attacks of the Poles is needed for the foreign Press, as well as for German propaganda purposes.' I was directed to go to Gleiwitz with five or six S.D. men and wait there until I received a code word from Heydrich indicating that the attack should take place. My instructions were to seize the radio station and hold it long enough to permit a Polish-speaking German, who would be put at my disposal, to broadcast a speech in Polish. Heydrich told me that this speech should state that the time had come for the conflict between the Germans and the Poles and that the Poles should get together and strike down any Germans from whom they met resistance. Heydrich also told me at this time that he expected an attack on Poland by Germany in a few days.

"I went to Gleiwitz and waited there a fortnight. Then I requested permission of Heydrich to return to Berlin, but was told to stay in Gleiwitz. Between 25 and 31 August I went to see Heinrich Mueller, head of the Gestapo, who was then near-by at Oppeln. In my presence Mueller discussed with a man named Mehhorn plans for another border incident, in which it should be made to appear that Polish soldiers were attacking German troops.... Germans in the approximate strength of a company were to be used. Mueller stated that he had twelve or thirteen condemned criminals who were to be dressed in Polish uniforms and left dead on the ground at the scene of the incident to show that they had been killed while attacking. For this purpose they were to be given fatal injections by a doctor employed by Heydrich. Then they were also to be given gunshot wounds. After the assault members of the Press and other persons were to be taken to the spot of the incident. A police report was subsequently to be prepared.

"Mueller told me that he had an order from Heydrich to make one of those criminals available to me for the action at Gleiwitz. The code name by which he referred to these criminals was *Konserven* (canned goods).

"The incident at Gleiwitz in which I participated was carried out on the evening preceding the German attack on Poland. As I recall, war broke out on 1 September, 1939. At noon on 31 August I received by telephone from Heydrich the code word for the attack which was to take place at eight o'clock that evening. Heydrich said: 'In order to carry out this attack, report to Mueller for "canned goods." ' I did this and gave Mueller instructions to deliver the man near the radio station. I received this man and had him laid down at the entrance to the station. He was alive, but he was completely unconscious. I tried to open his eyes. I could not recognize by his eyes that he was alive, only by his breathing. I did not see the shot wounds, but a lot of blood was smeared across his face. He was in civilian clothes.

"We seized the radio station as ordered, broadcast a speech of

three to four minutes over an emergency transmitter, fired some pistol shots, and left."

Himmler's Security Service thus having started the war, German tanks rolled across the Polish plains and Luftwaffe bombers battered Polish cities. Hitler declared that he was donning a soldier's uniform and would not take it off until victory was won. Himmler also decided to "go to the front" at once and moved into "Special Train Heinrich," which consisted of fourteen cars, a mobile Gestapo and S.S. headquarters organized in a similar manner to Hitler's and Goering's Field H.Q. Anti-aircraft guns were mounted on one coach, another carried luggage. Himmler occupied a drawing-room coach, there were sleepers, a coach for the Secretariat, a food store and more anti-aircraft coaches. Two personal servants, an Austrian batman and barber, and his bodyguard, Police Sergeant Kirmaier, were with him; his military adjutant was Obersturmbannfuehrer (Lieutenant-colonel) Werner Grothmann, who stayed with him until the end. The total staff amounted to fifty people. When Himmler delegated Karl Wolff as his personal liaison officer in Hitler's H.Q., Dr. Rudolf Brandt, another secretary, became his closest confidant —apart from the inevitable Kersten. As Heydrich had many other duties to perform, his deputy, young Walter Schellenberg, joined the train as chief of intelligence, attaching himself closely to the Reichfuehrer.

Himmler spent much of his time in "Special Train Heinrich" deep in thought. From his contemplation he emerged to tour the country behind the Wehrmacht lines and to observe the Jews, who were more thickly concentrated in Poland than in any other part of Europe—or anywhere else in the world, for that matter. As had been his habit during visits to concentration camps, he ordered some of the "criminal specimen," as he called them, to be dragged into his presence to demonstrate to his entourage the construction of their bones, the outlines of their features. Under blows and insults, trembling old men were held up before him as the Reichsfuehrer S.S. pointed to their faces with a stick, ridiculed their earlocks, had their prayer ribbons torn from them by fellow Jews and presented for inspection to S.S. men, because he would not allow his Black Knights to touch such things. "These people are vermin," he expostulated. Then he returned to his train to ponder again. Many of his associates have been questioned after the war in an effort to piece together the extraordinary mental process by which Himmler arrived at the decision to exterminate all Jews in his power. It was a difficult, exasperating quest. None of them would admit to having ever heard him actually saying that such a decision had been made, and only a few went so far as to admit they believed that it was a decision arrived at in private conversation between Hitler and Himmler under the stress of reverses in 1941 and 1942, and that

Himmler, shouldering the responsibility for the execution of Hitler's order as a matter of duty, only communicated it to those immediately concerned with the gruesome task.

But one S.S. leader, now at liberty, though he will not allow himself to be quoted, insists that Himmler made the decision already during his first visit to Poland towards the end of September, 1939, and that he put his plan before Hitler not much later. Hitler eventually agreed it would be necessary to arrive at a *endgueltige Loesung* (final solution) of the Jewish problem. "Final solution" became the term which the Nazi leaders invariably applied to the mass murder, to the extermination of Europe's Jews, although in the few available Nazi documents dealing with the subject the extermination is also sometimes referred to as *Aktion 14 F 13.* Neither Wolff, who ought to know; Schellenberg, who was still held in Landsberg prison as a war criminal when I made my inquiries; nor Kaltenbrunner, before he was executed, would explain the derivation of this code word. None of them knew anything about Himmler's decision—they said. Himmler's thoughts of these days, however, have later been given expression by his friend, Dr. Hans Frank, the Nazi lawyer, cabinet minister and S.S. Upper Group Leader who became German Governor-General of Occupied Poland. Himmler's train of thought ran exactly on the lines of one of Frank's speeches (delivered in Krakow), a copy of which has been found. It reflects a long discussion which he had with Himmler, whose S.S. organization, it was clear from the start, was the only available suitable instrument with which to bring about the "final solution."

"As far as the Jews are concerned," he said, "I want to tell you quite frankly that they must be done away with in one way or another. The Fuehrer once said that if Jewry should provoke another war . . . the Jew will have found his end in Europe. I know that many measures against the Jews are being criticized and there is talk about harshness and cruelty, but I beg you to agree with me that . . . we will have pity on the German people only and nobody else in the world. This war would only be a partial success if the whole lot of Jewry would survive while we have shed our best blood. My attitude towards the Jews is . . . that they must disappear. A discussion is going to take place with S.S. Lieutenant-General Heydrich in the Reich Security Main Office. A great migration of the Jews is to begin. But what shall be done with them? Do you think we shall allow them to settle. . . ? Gentlemen, I must ask you to arm yourselves against all pity. We must annihilate the Jews wherever we find them and wherever it is possible in order to maintain the structure of the Reich as a whole. . . . The Jews represent for us extraordinarily malignant gluttons. We have now approximately two million five hundred thousand in the Govern-

ment General (of Poland), perhaps with the Jewish mixtures and everything that goes with it three million five hundred thousand Jews. We cannot shoot or poison those three million five hundred thousand Jews; but we shall, nevertheless, be able to take measures which will lead, somehow, to their annihilation. The Government General must become free of Jews, the same as the Reich. . . ."

Orders were issued for all Polish Jews to register with officials of the Gestapo, who had followed the Wehrmacht into Poland. The registration was only the first move towards Himmler's final solution. The next was that the Jews were driven from their homes and concentrated in ghettoes. Herded together like cattle and confined in small areas, scores to each room, they tried to survive without official food allocation, and risked their lives whenever they ventured beyond the closely guarded limits of their confinement. Already the S.S. began to hunt down young men and all those whom they could conceivably regard as capable of carrying arms or who might be tempted to go underground as guerillas. Thousands were murdered in the process, but many more went on the fatal march to the concentration camps. The majority were destined for two new camps, Auschwitz (German for the Polish Oswiecim) and Maidaneck, whose names are marked in blood on the map of Jewish sufferings.

Obviously in anticipation of a large influx of prisoners, Poles and Jews, orders had been issued to clear the concentration camps of as many as possible of the old inmates. The camp commandants interpreted these orders in the only way they could understand them, regarding them as an obvious instruction to intensify their murder campaign. Release statistics, as far as they have been preserved, show that the number of releases was infinitesimal. Eugen Kogon, the expert on concentration camps, estimated[1] that, in sixteen German concentration camps during a period of five months, 109,000 new prisoners were received. In the same period 4,711 were released, 9,267 officially described as having been executed, 28,000 removed from one camp to another and 70,610 registered as deceased. In view of these large numbers of corpses, victims of execution and other slower forms of extermination, the problem of disposal was greatly aggravated.

In Dachau, for instance, urgent orders were issued for the construction of a big crematorium. Working in the surveyor's office, together with other Austrian Catholics who had been taken to the camp in 1938, was Dr. Leopold Figl—one of the outstanding personalities, public figures and statesmen who have emerged from concentration camps to rise to a great position in the post-war world. Graduate of an agricultural high school, where he had also

[1] *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, by Eugen Kogon (Secker and Warburg, London).

been trained as a surveyor, Dr. Figl was first assigned to gravel digging in Dachau. Later he became a slave labourer in a bricklayers' gang. On account of his special qualifications he was finally attached to the surveyor's office, first as an engineer and then as its head.

Already Dr. Figl had suffered the indignity and the ordeal of several beatings as punishment for offences against the camp rules—discussing politics, which was regarded as a major crime—but had proved himself so useful and efficient that the lazy, inexpert and often helpless S.S. surveyors had come to rely on his assistance and guidance. Eventually Dr. Figl was instructed to draw up the plans for the Dachau crematorium and ordered to complete them with great speed—everything had to be done with great speed—so that the death-rate could be kept up to suitable proportions. Here was a prisoner of the S.S., ordered to work so that his gaolers should be able to intensify the murder campaign against his fellow prisoners—typical of that most insidious S.S. practice to set their prisoners against each other.

The crude pattern of the new factory of death which he was expected to produce would not have given him much trouble. But things seemed to go wrong from the start. Figl planned for materials which were not available. His designs were not suitable for the location which the S.S. commandant had selected for the new incinerator. The plans were spoilt, lost, redrawn, destroyed several times over. Dr. Figl, ingeniously using every trick at his disposal, risking his life, making every conceivable excuse, diverting his S.S. bosses, was still working on the plans three years later. Alas, other crematoria went up in the subsidiary camps around Dachau! But there was a limit to their capacity. Many unknown candidates for death owe their survival to the failure of Dr. Leopold Figl, who has emerged from the Dachau horror to become the first post-war Chancellor of his martyred country.

Dark clouds were gathering not only over the heads of Poles and Jews, but also those of seven Germans who belonged to the privileged circle of Hitler's most loyal "old fighters," the earliest members of his party. The seven actually died on 8 November, 1939, at the Buergerbrau beerhouse in Munich, a few minutes after Hitler had left the hall and the annual celebration commemorating his putsch in 1923. They died as a result of one of the most intriguing incidents in the flashy and thunderous history of Hitler's reign. The events leading up to their death have since been subject to speculation and interpretation from many quarters. But though several of the people involved in the dramatic developments have burst into print with explanations, the full truth has not yet been told.

The story, as it was suggested in Germany at the time, started in the Hague, capital of still neutral Holland, soon after the outbreak

of war, and corroborative evidence—not of the truth of Nazi statements, but of the vague outline of events—came from a British agent, Captain S. Payne Best,[1] who was stationed in Holland and described himself as a member of the British Intelligence Service. It appears that Captain Best had obtained information about a plot of high-ranking German officers who had decided to kill Hitler and to make peace with the Allies. With the help of a German refugee who called himself Dr. Franz, Captain Best managed to establish contact with this group of alleged conspirators. So great seemed to him the possibilities arising out of this contact that he decided to discard the usual precaution of dealing with the Germans through his sub-agents. He arranged a personal meeting with their emissaries on the neutral ground of Holland. It was a difficult, hazardous undertaking, and though Captain Best's own account makes fascinating reading he writes about it with a certain naïvety which is capable of explanation only if one assumes that he is still not permitted to tell the whole truth of the matter.

Best, according to his story, revealed himself to the emissaries of the conspirators as a genuine British agent by arranging at their request for a certain item to be broadcast in the B.B.C. German news service. Having thus established his authority, he asked an official of the British Embassy in the Hague, Major R. H. Stephens, to accompany him to a meeting with the German officers. He felt obliged to inform Major-General von Oorschot, Chief of Dutch Military Intelligence, of his plans, and Oorschot instructed a young Dutch officer, Lieutenant Klop, to facilitate Best's progress towards the heavily fortified Dutch–German frontier region, where a German attack was expected almost any day. A first meeting took place on 19 October, when two Germans presented themselves at Zutphen, a small town in Gelderland, and introduced themselves as Captain von Seidlitz and Lieutenant Grosch. After a preliminary discussion it was agreed to meet again. Captain Best asked to be put in touch with the German general, said to be the leader of the conspiracy. Time was pressing, as, the Germans indicated, an attempt on Hitler's life was planned to be made almost any day now.

But when it came to the second meeting—this time at the village of Dinxperlo—the general still did not turn up. He sent instead three officers, one of whom was again Grosch, while the other two introduced themselves as Colonel Martini and Major Schaemmel. The three Germans, incidentally, when crossing into Holland, had been arrested by the Dutch frontier-post, which had given Lieutenant Klop an opportunity of inspecting their papers. He found them perfectly in order, arranged for the release of the Ger-

[1] *The Venlo Incident*, by Captain S. Payne Best (Hutchinson, London, 1950).

mans, and took them to Best and Stephens. Schaemmel was a good-looking fellow—Best found it difficult to estimate his age, as his face was adorned with the scars which German students cherish as souvenirs of their sabre duels. He was obviously the leader of the party. Best, with whom he discussed the situation intelligently, described him as reasonable and well informed. "We are Germans first," Schaemmel said, "and before we take any steps against Hitler we want to know whether Britain and France are ready to grant us a just and honourable peace. . . ." As a result of the conversation and subsequent secret wireless communication the British agents were to meet "the general" definitely on 7 November at a place near Venlo. Once more they were disappointed. Schaemmel arrived and explained that the general had been called to a meeting with Hitler and would only be available on the afternoon of 9 November at the same place.

The place was a roadside café between Venlo and the German frontier, which was not more than two hundred yards away. Best and Stephens, accompanied by Lieutenant Klop and a Dutch driver, went to the rendezvous, but, Best records, when they reached it he was perturbed to see the barrier at the German frontier-post down. There was now nothing between them and hostile Germany. "I let the car drift slowly along the front of the café," Best says: ". . . Schaemmel was standing on the veranda at the corner and made a sign which I took to mean that our bird (the German general) was inside." In the next moment there was pandemonium, shouting and shooting, a car crowded with rough-looking characters drove up and almost bumped into Best's car. "Hands up!" they shouted. "Our number is up," Best heard Stephens say, before, under a hail of blows and pushes, they were dragged across the German frontier. The Dutch lieutenant made a gallant attempt to rescue them, but fell, mortally wounded by shots from German guns.

Next morning Germany and the world woke up to see the German headlines: "Attempt on the Life of the Fuehrer—Bomb Explosion in Munich—Adolf Hitler's miraculous escape. Seven 'old fighters' killed after beerhouse ceremony." What had happened? What was the connexion between the beerhouse bomb and the abduction of Best and Stephens? The German author of a post-war book which deals with some of the more mysterious aspects of Nazi policy, diplomacy and espionage, under a pseudonym behind which a former high Gestapo official is hiding, also deals extensively with the affair. According to his account, a crisis developed in Germany early in 1939 when General Walter von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, resisted an order from Hitler to launch an immediate attack on France. There was supposed to have been a stormy conversation between Fuehrer and Army com-

mander which had left Hitler fearful lest the Army might, once more, attempt to oppose his wishes. When he discussed the matter with Himmler it occurred to him that a strong demonstration of the German people's loyalty would strengthen his position. Hitler left it to Himmler to make the necessary arrangements and to engineer such a demonstration.

According to this highly coloured version, Heydrich—very likely remembering the success of the Reichstag fire plot—took advantage of a courageous little German anti-Nazi, Georg Elser, whom his men had been keeping under observation for some time. Elser had been seen acting suspiciously in the Munich beerhall where the annual Nazi anniversary celebration of the 1923 putsch was shortly to take place. Elser had not been disturbed by Heydrich's Security Service men, although they were said to have watched him planting a bomb in a pillar of the beerhouse cellar, near where Hitler was expected to take his place of honour, and fixing the fuse and attaching a clock to it only a few days before the meeting. Heydrich's men, it is thought, were anxious to catch whoever was behind Elser. But now, with a time-tested Gestapo technique, Heydrich ordered his agents surreptitiously to assist Elser in his preparations for an attempt on Hitler's life. At the same time, Heydrich kept himself fully informed about the negotiations with the British Secret Service agents in Holland, which he encouraged in the hope that they might lead to the unmasking of disloyal German officers. Now he decided to strike a double blow. Elser's bomb would be allowed to explode—giving Hitler just enough time to escape. And, instead of continuing contact with the British agents, he ordered them to be captured so that the blame for the attempt on Hitler's life could be put at the door of the British Secret Service. Once the Fuehrer had been "miraculously" saved from certain death there would be an upsurge of feeling among the German people which was bound to strengthen his position.

It is a highly doubtful theory, though it is true that Heydrich instructed his closest collaborator, S.S. Brigade Leader Walter Schellenberg, the "foreign expert," to take a hand in the negotiations between Best and the "German military opposition." Schellenberg, who lacked much but certainly not courage, thus appeared on the scene of Venlo under the name of Major Schaemmel. It was Schellenberg-Schaemmel, aged twenty-nine at the time, who organized the abduction of Best and Stephens—a clever manoeuvre and a great blow to British prestige, although it cannot be said that the British agents made his task very difficult or dangerous. Captain Best met Schellenberg frequently afterwards while he was held as a very important prisoner in Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he was soon joined in the same prison block by Georg Elser.

Best, however, was not allowed to make contact with the man whom the German Press described as his hireling.

The mystery of the bomb which exploded just after Hitler had hurriedly finished an unusually short speech, and had left the hall with Himmler and other members of his government, is shrouded by several circumstances. "Murderous Conspiracy against Germany Unmasked," *Der Voelkischer Beobachter* revealed on 23 November in banner headlines. "The Background is Clear" and "The British Secret Service in the Dock," it added. Pictures of Elser, Best and Stephens appeared on the front page, and Otto Strasser, the anti-Hitler Nazi, was mentioned as one of the originators of the attempt. But the "hired murderer," Elser, and "his masters," Best and Stephens, though promptly arrested, were never brought to trial. They were held for five years. We shall meet Captain Best again before the allied victory ended his ordeal. Elser was one of the few "important prisoners" whom the S.S. murdered just before the liberation of the concentration camps.

Some of the repercussions of the Munich bomb attempt in Germany were almost amazing. In the twilight of Nazi conspiracies the left hand did not trust the right hand, and Himmler was never sure how far his own subordinates had gone along with real conspirators or whose high support such conspirators might have enjoyed. Sometimes Heydrich did not tell him the details of his activities because he wanted to feed Himmler's suspicions and to stiffen the back of his hesitant chief. In the atmosphere of strain and doubt which prevailed at the time, Himmler began to suspect that Goering had been in contact with some dissident officers, that —as he alone among leading Nazis was not present in Munich on 8 November—he might have had a hand in the bomb plot. As yet Himmler was not prepared to do more than keep Goering under close observation. It was no accident that Arthur Heinecke, the Gestapo agent who caught Elser when he tried to escape to Switzerland, was rewarded with the appointment as chief of Hermann Goering's *Begleitkommando* (Personal Police Bodyguard). One could never know whether Himmler's men were guarding or watching their charges. Goering found out much later that Heinecke had been ordered to write a weekly report on his activities for the Gestapo. When challenged, Heinecke admitted this frankly—Goering good-humouredly told him to carry on.

CHAPTER TWELVE

FOUNTAIN OF LIFE—AND DEATH

THE German panzers were rolling inexorably across the Polish landscape. The Wehrmacht was giving the world a first dramatic demonstration of the blitzkrieg. The Luftwaffe was pounding Polish cities. War had been welcome to Heinrich Himmler, who had seen himself as a hero taking the field by the side of his proud Black Guards. War actually found the Reichsfuehrer in his special train, well behind the front line. Karl Wolff had joined Hitler in the mobile Fuehrer H.Q. where he acted as Himmler's liaison officer, but Werner Grothmann, the young S.S. adjutant, had remained with his chief, and his private secretary, Erika Lorenz, sister of an S.S. brigadier, had accompanied Heinrich Himmler to war. Himmler was tense as he pored over maps and charts, statistics and reports which mounted on his desk. "Here, Grothmann!" he exclaimed. "Here is a pocket of Germans which we must rescue. . . !" Two minutes later he would shake his head. "Millions of Jews, here! Millions of them!" Fräulein Lorenz handed him a directive which had been brought in by a messenger: *"Reichssache Geheim,"* he read (Reichs Matter, Secret), and beamed with satisfaction. Here, signed by Goering and Keitel, was his authorization, nay the order to "bring back for final return into the Reich all German nationals and racial Germans in foreign countries." The directive empowered him, as he had always demanded, "to eliminate" parts of the population (of foreign countries) which "represented a danger to the Reich. . . ."

The secret directive, not published at the time, gave real content to an office with which Hitler had previously invested Himmler—Commissioner for the Preservation of German Folkdom; it enabled him to implement a policy which he had expounded in a confidential publication of his office, *Der Menscheneinsatz,* in which he had stated: "The removal of foreign races from the incorporated eastern territories is one of the most essential goals to be accomplished in the German East. . . !" The German East! It was an expression which he had coined himself and proposed to the Fuehrer, who had smiled benevolently at his premier disciple straining like a dog on a leash, to "go East!" "Fräulein Lorenz!" Himmler ordered. "Take this down . . . to be published in *Der*

Menscheneinsatz!" As if in a trance, Himmler dictated: "Two reasons make the regaining of German blood necessary. (1) Prevention of a further increase of the Polish intelligentsia through families of German descent, even if they are Polonized; (2) increase of the population by racially desirable elements . . . and the acquisition of ethno-biologically unobjectionable elements for the German reconstruction of agriculture and industry. . . ."

"In dealing with members of a foreign country, especially with members of some Slav nationality," Himmler said later, throwing light on what had been in his mind when the S.S. went into action in the east, "we must not start from German points of view, we must not endow these people with decent German thoughts and logical conclusions of which they are not capable, but we must take them as they really are. . . . Obviously in such a mixture of peoples there will always be some racially good types. Therefore, I think it is our duty to take their children with us; if necessary, remove them from their environment. We either win over the good blood that we can use for ourselves and give it a place in our people . . . or we destroy that blood. For us the end of this war will mean an open road to the east, the creation of the Germanic Reich in this way or that . . . the fetching home of thirty million human beings of our blood, so that still during our lifetime we shall be a people of one hundred and twenty million Germanic souls. That means that we shall be the sole and decisive power in Europe. That means that we shall then be able to tackle the peace during which we shall be willing for the first twenty years to rebuild and spread out our villages and towns and that we shall push the borders of our German race five hundred kilometres farther to the east."

This was Himmler's credo, these thoughts set the pattern of Himmler's work, although it only began to blossom forth fully when, with the invasion of Russia, the treacherous Nazi-Soviet non-aggression Pact had come to a bloody end. These operations were carried out with great efficiency and complete disregard for the human pawns, German or non-German, which the self-styled creator of a new German knighthood, the pacemaker of a greater and stronger German super-race, tore from their homes. Himmler at once ordered that a register of all Germans in Poland be compiled. The campaign against Poland was hardly over when he was already obsessed with fear that some Germans who had lived in Poland all their lives might not want to "return to the German fold." "Where racial Germans have not applied for entry in the ethnical German list," a new order decreed, "their names must be turned over to the local State Police . . . if they do not register within eight days they are to be taken into protective custody for transfer to a concentration camp. . . ." "And if you do not

want to be my brother," says a popular German ditty, "I shall smash your head!"

Himmler was in his element. "Anti-social persons and others of inferior hereditary quality will not be resettled!" he fulminated. "Frame an order," he told his legal expert. "They must be sent to concentration camps!" Politically doubtfuls—concentration camp. Women with bad records — concentration camp! He called in Wilhelm Koppe, one of his race experts, to carry out the resettlement programme. "The victory of the German weapons," said Koppe, after his interview with Himmler, "must be followed by the victory of the German race over the Polish race!" In accordance with this policy German farmers, labourers, civil servants, merchants, artisans were to infiltrate into the regained regions to form a protective wall against foreign penetration and as a starting point for the racial infusion of territories for the East."

The machinery of conquest, integration, resettlement, infiltration worked at full blast. The Wehrmacht was counting the miles of territorial progress, Goering was looking for art treasures, Goebbels sent out his propaganda units to tell the world about Germany's might. Himmler took charge of the poor Polish people. To his train came an unending stream of experts, administrators, police officers, S.S. leaders. From the train they emerged with his signature on the measures which they proposed, which he had suggested, which had been discussed and were now issued as laws. Farmland—confiscate it! The farmers—send them to Germany as agricultural labourers. Time went on and Poland was already incorporated into Germany as Government General. The method of confiscation and abduction had long been streamlined. It was all so simple. One report which found its way on to Himmler's desk is typical of those he perused and approved in these days: "The lack of agricultural labourers still exists in the Old Reich," it read. "The transfer of the previous owners of the confiscated agricultural enterprises to the Reich as farm workers, together with their entire families, is possible without any difficulty. It is only necessary for the Labour Office to receive the lists of the persons in time in order to enable it to take the necessary steps (collection and transportation; distribution over the various regions in need of such labour). The confiscation of these Polish enterprises in Alzen will be carried out within the next few days. The commandant of Auschwitz concentration camp will furnish S.S. men and trucks for the execution of the action. Should it not yet be possible to take the Poles to Auschwitz, they should be transferred to the empty castle at Zator. The liberated Polish property is to be given to the needy racial German farmers for their use."

Himmler's office for Strengthening of the German Folkdom, the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* (National German Central Office), the

Race and Settlement Main Office, known under the German initials as RUSHA, worked overtime. Through these organizations he issued orders which automatically suggested themselves to him. He was, as Wolff told me—and Wolff, who was seeing him less frequently now, could the better judge his reactions and the mental process which guided his decisions—"he was no longer thinking in terms of human beings, of men, women and children!" When Himmler gave instructions about Poles he was like a man inspired —inspired with evil, to be sure—laying down the law as if he was dealing with insensitive objects. And yet, sometimes, he would be found with his head in hands, muttering to himself: "It must be done. I must do it!" and the like. Wolff cannot say whether he was referring to such orders as the National German Central Office was now issuing. There were, for instance, to be no more church services in the Polish language. Evangelical priests who served their Polish bishops loyally were to be "regarded and treated as enemies" (concentration camps), Polish church holidays were abolished, all Polish cultural and economic organizations were banned—no organized body or corporation serving Polish interests survived. Poles were forbidden to visit German theatres or cinemas —the Polish theatres and cinemas were closed. No more Polish newspapers or radio—indeed, Poles were forbidden to own a wireless set. And there were the Polish children of "persons suitable for Germanization." This is where Himmler brought the innocent little *Lebensborn* organization into the picture.

When the officials of *Lebensborn* were indicted after the war, the Public Prosecutor explained that Himmler's racial programme for Poland provided that "all racially valuable children whose parents had perished in the war—or those who had vanished in concentration camps—shall be accommodated in German orphanages and adoption of such children by Poles is barred. Into such institutions all healthy Polish children are to be taken if they are under ten. . . ."

One of Himmler's secretaries told me that a special S.S. courier was ordered to stand by to take messages from the Reichsfuehrer to his children. Eagerly, when the courier returned, he held out his hand for letters which they had sent to *"Geliebter Vater!"* (beloved father). His children were always on his mind. "He was such a good and thoughtful father," the secretary told me. But while she was admiring his fatherly qualities in 1939 she typed his order dealing with the education of children in the east and which decreed that, for the non-German population, there should be no higher school than the fourth grade, where simple arithmetic up to the figure of five hundred was practised. There should be no teaching beyond the writing of the name and an explanation that "it is the law of God to obey the Germans and to be honest and good."

Himmler did not regard the teaching of reading as necessary and there should be no schools in Poland apart from those which conformed with these orders. Parents wanting a better education for their children could, according to his decree, apply to the local Higher S.S. and Police Leader, who would decide whether the child was racially suitable; if the quality of the child's blood was recognized as "good" the parents should be told that the child would be sent to school in Germany and should remain there permanently. Needless to say, after a few children of hapless Polish mothers who had tried to better their prospects had been taken away to Germany as a result of their applications, no Polish parent henceforth approached the S.S. Himmler's order said quite explicitly: "It was desirable that Polish parents should part from their small children and not produce any more." Finally, he ordered an annual review of all children between the ages of six and ten in a continued attempt to discover those "of precious blood" and suitable for removal to Germany.

The *Lebensborn*, the Fountain of Life, scrupulously applied itself to the task. The tragedies in the wake of its activities are difficult to translate into the insensitive matter of cold print. Among *Lebensborn* documents I found, for instance, a thin file dealing with Helen Buckawiecka, who was eight years old when the *Lebensborn* Social Service Office at Lodz, Poland, took her under its care and removed her to the Lebensborn Children's Home in Bruckau, District of Gostinin. The file contained a number of simple letters, written by little Helen's mother, asking for the child to be returned to her. She was supported by her brother, whose pathetic appeal has been preserved. The correspondence ends abruptly with a two-line marginal note by a *Lebensborn* official to the effect that "the mother has already been informed that her request to have the child returned to her cannot be granted." There are not many such files, because only in rare instances were mothers so lucky as to trace the whereabouts of their abducted children. *Lebensborn* took care of that. The children were not allowed to write to their relatives or to receive letters from them. But even among the hardened crowd of S.S. men and their female employees were some who risked punishment by allowing a trickle of illegal correspondence to filter through.

Polish orphans—and their number was legion—were collected in orphanages, whatever the "quality" of their blood. From his office in Posen, Dr. Barthels, a high official of *Lebensborn*, organized their removal to Germany, chiefly to the *Lebensborn* home in Puschkau, near Kalisch. Of many thousands of these children, many of them too small to realize what was happening, all trace has been lost. The German foster-parents, all reliable members of the Nazi Party, to whom they were eventually allocated

by *Lebensborn*, dared not reveal after the war that their strapping infants, German speaking, German thinking, were really of Polish origin, carried away by the *Lebensborn* body-snatchers. But among the bigger ones, aged eight, nine, ten, there manifested itself beautifully, miraculously, a strong Polish national feeling so that they braved all punishment and defied their masters, who forbade them the use of the Polish mother tongue. When no teacher or supervisor was in sight these children continued to speak Polish, and as they grew into boys and girls over ten they left no means untried to communicate with such Polish friends or relatives as had survived.

Himmler, in the meantime, knowing that the affairs of the *Lebensborn* were in good and reliable hands, went westwards, where, behind the Siegfried Line, his friend, Sepp Dietrich, and the *Leibstandarte* were celebrating Christmas at the front. The Reichsfuehrer joined the party and the occasion was duly recorded by *Das Schwarze Korps*, which had kept a glaring spotlight trained on the progress of Himmler's S.S. divisions. Almost every week the S.S. repeated Himmler's battle cry: "S.S. men, I expect from you that you do more than your duty!" and every week it described how the S.S. commandos and police units moving behind the fast front-line divisions held the huge no-man's-land and, in the words of one reporter, "secured the rear of the front against murder and cowardly stabs in the back." While the battle raged, S.S. men alone, sometimes for many days at a time, severed from all connexions with the front or the rear, had to stand surrounded by enemies. There was nothing now in these S.S. front reports to describe the Polish enemy as sub-human, as Goebbels had done before the outbreak of the fighting. No, the despised opponents of the Wehrmacht, reeling back under the surprise attack of the German panzers, found their feet and, unafraid, inflicted heavy casualties—yes, even on Himmler's S.S. supermen. "Many graves in the East," said the reporter, "where S.S. men fought, show how they laid down their lives for Germany."

The Death Head Brigade, the concentration-camp guards, under General Eicke, were now turning the whole of conquered Poland into one vast concentration camp. But in Poland some of their victims still had weapons in their hands. Major-General Roettig of the Death Head Brigade was in his car on the road to Tomashov, far behind the front, when, according to an S.S. report, Polish soldiers appeared as if from nowhere to bar his path. Only one man of Roettig's party survived to tell the full story of how Roettig became the first S.S. and police general to pay a small instalment towards settlement of the debt which the Death Head Brigades already owed to humanity. He was killed on the spot by the Polish raiding party. In real war he could not exercise the unchallenged

authority which had hitherto guaranteed immunity to the concentration-camp guards, however ruthlessly they had fought their helpless victims. Many other S.S. leaders were to share Roettig's fate, until two years later, soon after the outbreak of war between Germany and Russia, "Death Head" Eicke himself, Commander-in-Chief Concentration Camps, was killed on the Eastern Front.

Himmler, in organizing S.S. activities in the east, was temporarily deprived of the advice and assistance of Reinhard Heydrich. Many stories have been told among the S.S. intimates of the conversation between Himmler and Heydrich, from which the latter emerged to take off his cherished S.S. general's uniform and to exchange it for the humble tunic of a Luftwaffe major. Reinhard Heydrich had persuaded his chief that the time had come for him to earn his military spurs. He had achieved a great ambition and attained a commission in the Luftwaffe. Probably the only thing that can be said in his favour is that he had qualified for the assignment the hard way. For months past he had spent every free hour taking flying lessons and training as a fighter pilot. Hermann Goering had assisted Himmler's right-hand man to earn his "wings" under a well-protected cloak of anonymity. Was it for the joy of helping a young man to take to the air—as he had been helped a quarter of a century previously? Was it an irresistible urge to send Himmler's assistant into mortal combat? Goering did everything to smooth Heydrich's road to the front. Now he went into the campaign against Norway.

On 9 April the German forces attacked Denmark and Norway by sea and air. Copenhagen was occupied, German naval units landed at Narvik, Trondheim, Bergen and Stavanger. The Luftwaffe took part in extensive mining operations. The Wehrmacht went into action under a formidable air-cover, and one of the Messerschmitt fighters roaming in the Norwegian sky was piloted by a jubilant, exhilarated Luftwaffe officer whom only a few of his own squadron comrades knew as the dreaded and mysterious, remote and unapproachable Reinhard Heydrich. For two glorious weeks—as he described them—Heydrich was just a fighter pilot in the war, carefree, happy, according to those who saw him at the time. Once in these hectic days his Messerschmitt overturned on landing at an aerodrome near Hamburg, and the fire-brigade and rescue squad scurrying to the scene of the crash fully expected to find the pilot's charred body in the burning wreckage. To their surprise they saw Heydrich walking towards them with a big, boyish smile on his lips. It was difficult to believe that here was the man who had been helping Himmler to plan the subjugation of Germany and the methodical extermination of millions at the same time. Heydrich now was just a young airman. It was the same when, two years later, he went to the front once more, a Messer-

schmitt pilot in Colonel-General Schober's Army Group which attacked Russia from Rumania. On this occasion, too, he had a narrow escape when forced to make a "belly landing" behind the Russian lines. Leaving his wrecked aircraft behind, he made his way back to the Luftwaffe fighter-station in German-occupied territory.

For many years past his own employees had hated and feared Heydrich as much as the "enemies of the State" whom he persecuted so mercilessly. Under the impact of war, glorying in his achievements as a fighter pilot, he is said to have greatly mellowed. Arrogant, unjust, aloof, malicious, unforgiving as he had been to friends or foes alike ever since he rose to a leading position in the S.S., he now became considerate, understanding, almost friendly, at least towards his subordinates.

This change, however, went hand in hand with a hardening of his attitude towards Heinrich Himmler. Heydrich could no longer hide his satisfaction at having beaten the Reichsfuehrer in their race for a real baptism of fire. Now that he had proved himself to himself—and received much praise for his courage—he appeared demonstratively less subservient to Himmler, who could make no such claim, and less inclined to humour his chief or to disguise his intellectual ascendancy over him. Himmler, in turn, became increasingly jealous, if not fearful of Heydrich. The relationship between the two men was about to undergo a subtle but profound change, although neither they nor anybody else was really aware of it at the time.

Himmler's reaction was that of a typical hysteric. Embarrassed by the success of his *aide* he sought refuge in his real or imagined physical afflictions. There were so few people to whom he could turn in his distress. As if anxious to show why he had not sought similar fame on the battlefield—even though it was hardly expected from a man in his position—he confided to Kersten that his father had died of cancer of the stomach and that he was sure to have inherited the disease. He felt terrible. "Without Kersten," Karl Wolff said later, "Himmler would have died there and then." The war was at a critical stage, great decisions were at hand. The *Waffen* S.S. under Sepp Dietrich was fighting in an important sector and as an integral part of the Wehrmacht which conquered France. But the Reichsfuehrer S.S. and Chief of the German Police was lying helpless, submitting himself to the *Ausstrahlung* (emanation) from Kersten's healing hands, which alone relieved his pains. He was not in a condition to take a personal part in the deployment of the Gestapo and the Security Service in Occupied France. Although a hard, rough Himmler favourite, Karl Oberg, was installed in a new Paris Gestapo H.Q. in the Avenue Foch as a Higher S.S. and police leader, France was as yet not to be subjected to the worst

Himmler's hordes could do. While Hitler still hoped for a negotiated peace with Britain, he wanted to use France as an example of German "tolerance" and affinity with the Western Powers. Even if Himmler had not been sick in mind and body, he was obviously not the person whom Hitler was anxious to keep in the public eye just now. The realization that he was "not wanted" contributed to Himmler's condition.

He did not take part in the frantic search for documents and valuables, art treasures, church property and Jewish possessions in which the *Einsatzstab* (Action Staff), a special organization under Alfred Rosenberg, was engaged in Holland and France, although Rosenberg relied on the S.S. and Gestapo to facilitate the search. "Reichsleiter Rosenberg," said Keitel in a memorandum addressed to the Chief of the Army High Command in Holland, dated 5 July, 1940, "has suggested to the Fuehrer that State libraries and archives be searched for documents valuable to Germany. . . . The Fuehrer has ordered that this suggestion be followed and that the Gestapo, supported by archivists of Reich Leader Rosenberg, be put in charge of the searches. The Chief of Security Police, S.S. Upper Group Leader Heydrich, has been informed. . . . These measures will be executed in all regions of the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France occupied by us. . . ."

Only when signs of resistance and underground activities in the occupied western territories increased did Himmler rouse himself to take a more active part in the repressive measures. Heydrich had resumed his work in Berlin, and a series of conferences between S.S. Gestapo and Wehrmacht leaders to decide on the best methods to be employed against the resistance occupied Himmler for many weeks. In October, 1940, he went to Spain in an attempt to strengthen Hitler's hand in negotiations to bring Franco into the war on Germany's side. His intervention was futile, his visit made no impression on Franco, who even failed to perceive the menacing implications which had been in Himmler's mind. Though the Reichsfuehrer S.S. hinted at action by the large and loyal Nazi colony in Spain, General Franco blandly turned a deaf ear to his threats. A visit to Norway which Himmler made in an effort to assert his waning authority produced better results. Encouraged by his presence, S.S. General Redeiss introduced the grimmest Gestapo technique to deal with Norway's patriots. Bishop Berggrav, a leader of the patriots, was put under arrest; thousands of young Norwegians were deported to German concentration camps. The Gestapo, assisted by units of the S.S., combed the coast of Norway from Trondheim to Narvik. Their haul of prisoners was a measure of Norway's opposition to the conquering Nazis.

In Oslo, in the Gestapo H.Q., which a few years later was to be destroyed by well-timed and even better-aimed R.A.F. bombs,

Heinrich Himmler joined Josef Terboven, Goering's friend and Gauleiter of Norway, in consultations. German authority would have to be asserted, if necessary by novel forms of coercion. At home Himmler had often previously discussed the possibilities of *Sippen* responsibility—the idea that an S.S. man's kith and kin should be held responsible for any crime committed by him. *Sippen* responsibility would lead to *Sippenhaft*—the arrest of a fugitive S.S. offender's family until he surrendered. *Sippenhaft*, incidentally, the fear of every S.S. man that his parents, his wife, his children even, might be arrested if he escaped the clutches of his oath to Himmler, was later almost invariably claimed as an excuse by S.S. leaders who pretended to have disagreed with Himmler but dared take no action against him. In Norway Himmler decided to translate *Sippenhaft* into the infamous hostage system which became one of the worst instruments of the Nazi terror.

At first fifty prominent Norwegian citizens were taken into custody as hostages for the "good behaviour" of the Norwegian patriots; soon there were a hundred. Within the next few months the system spread to every country occupied by the Wehrmacht. Yet young Norwegians, Danes, Belgians, Dutch and French patriots—and when Hitler carried the war into the Balkans, Jugoslavs and Greeks—escaped from their conquered countries, in spite of the danger to their relatives, to fight with the Allies against Nazi Germany. Into concentration camps the Gestapo began to herd their innocent fathers and brothers, often also their wives and children. In Belgium, supported by the military Commander-in-Chief, General von Falkenhausen, the hostage system was employed with particular ruthlessness. Belgian patriots of all parties had joined forces with the French Maquis, the underground fighters who fled to the mountains of the Haute Savoy to carry on the struggle against the German enemy. One of the Belgian underground liaison officers who maintained contact with the French Maquis was M. Arthur Haulot, who, after the war, became High Commissioner for Belgian Tourism.

Haulot's case is typical of the fate which befell many resistance men whose spirit no physical Gestapo torture could have broken. It was in 1940 that the Gestapo in Belgium became aware of Haulot's activities, although, protected and supported by every Belgian with whom he came into contact, it would have been well-nigh impossible for them to track the young resistance hero down. Haulot, under many guises, travelled from Belgium to France and back many times every month, crossing German frontier-posts almost at will. By devious devices he kept in touch with his young wife, who had remained behind in their Brussels flat until one day the Gestapo arrived to question her about her husband's whereabouts. Truthfully, Madame Haulot insisted that she did not know

—her husband was travelling about the country, she said. She only rarely heard from him, sometimes he sent a short letter or else there was a telephone call or a message put under her door. "Madame," a Gestapo agent told her with studied politeness, "unless we find your husband within a week we shall have to take you and your child into custody. . . ."

Two days later Arthur Haulot arrived at his home to embrace his wife and his child, he felt sure, for the last time. They did not speak—Madame Haulot knew that her husband had come to say goodbye, that he had decided to give himself up to save her and the baby. Without a tear in her eyes, she watched the tall, good-looking young man closing the door of their little flat behind him. His head erect, half an hour later, he walked into Brussels' Gestapo H.Q. to surrender to the Nazi authorities. The Gestapo officials—he never learnt their names—were jubilant. They treated him to wine and cigarettes. They were proud of their success in having brought to heel one of their most indomitable opponents. For six months Haulot was interrogated every day. There were no tortures, no third degree. Haulot began to hope again, until one day he was shown an order signed by General von Falkenhausen, committing him to a concentration camp "as a hostage." With fifty other leaders of the Belgian resistance Haulot was taken to Mauthausen, in Austria, where a new concentration camp was being constructed.

"Conditions were murderous," Haulot said after the war. "I was a strong young man, a sportsman accustomed to great exertion. But within a fortnight of working in Mauthausen, of which S.S. Colonel Franz Zieris was in charge, I was a physical wreck. . . ." Like others, Haulot was issued with thin gym shoes and forced to carry heavy stones at the double over roads which were in the process of being built. Sharp rocks viciously cut into his feet and legs, which soon swelled to three times their normal size. It was the disease from which most concentration-camp inmates in the working parties suffered—and perished. Mauthausen was to be extended for a special purpose. For three months Haulot and his fellow prisoners worked for twelve hours a day on a diet of thin vegetable soup and bread. At last they were told that within a few days a thousand prisoners would be transferred to Dachau. "We shall live . . ." a thousand prisoners told each other joyfully, when they found their names on the list of those selected for the transfer, "it can only be better wherever we shall be sent." There was a roll-call six weeks later when preparations for the transfer were at long last completed. Of the original thousand, fewer than three hundred and fifty had survived.

Haulot was one of the lucky survivors. "We were sent to Dachau," he said, "and when we arrived and saw the smooth asphalt parade-ground and camp roads some of us knelt down to

kiss the ground. . . ." Haulot did not know that he had another reason to be grateful to Fate. "Mauthausen," said a report compiled by the office of the Judge Advocate General of the United States Third Army, dated 17 June, 1945, "no doubt was the basis for long-term planning. It was constructed as a gigantic stone fortress on top of a mountain flanked by small barracks. . . . It was conducted with the sole purpose in mind of exterminating any so-called prisoner who entered within its walls. The so-called branches of Mauthausen were under direct command of S.S. officials located there . . . Gusen and Ebensee were its two most notorious branches . . . where prisoners were used as tools in construction . . . until they were beaten or starved into uselessness, whereupon they were customarily sent to Mauthausen for final disposal."

Dachau, in accordance with Himmler's orders to provide for a large influx of new prisoners at the outbreak of war, had been cleared of Jews who had been transferred to the new camps in Poland. Haulot joined a large family of international Socialists (Dr. Kurt Schumacher, the late German Socialist post-war leader, among them), Austrian Catholics and aristocrats (with the Princes Max and Ernst Hohenberg of the House of Habsburg), Czech bishops and intellectuals from many countries. "It was not so bad at the time . . ." he said. For the time being it was indeed not as bad as it was, for instance, in Buchenwald concentration camp, about which one of the guards, captured after the war, Andreas Pfaffenberger, a butcher by trade, told an American interrogation officer: "In 1939," he said, "all prisoners with tattooing on them were ordered to report to the dispensary . . . no one knew what the purpose was. But after the tattooed prisoners had been examined, the ones with the best and most artistic specimens were kept in the dispensary and then killed by injections administered by Karl Beigs, a criminal prisoner. The corpses were then turned over to the pathological department, where the desired pieces of tattooed skin were detached from the bodies and treated. The finished products were turned over to S.S. Standartenfuehrer Koch's wife, who had them fashioned into lampshades and other ornamental household articles. I myself saw such tattooed skins with various designs and legends on them, such as 'Hansel and Gretel,' which one prisoner had on his knee, and designs of ships from prisoners' chests. This work was done by a prisoner named Wernerbach."

At the War Crimes Trial in Nuremberg the American prosecutor, Mr. Thomas J. Dodd, produced Document 3421 PS (USA. 253) which contains the testimony of George C. Demas, Lieutenant, U.S.N.R., associated with the United States Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution, who certified that exhibits consisting of parchment found at Buchenwald Camp and captured by military forces were handed to him. "Based on medical findings," said the document,

"all these specimens are tattooed human skin." The Nuremberg Military Tribunal, already hardened by the gruesome evidence presented in the previous month, shuddered when the American Prosecutor pointed to a table in the court-room on which another exhibit had been placed. "It is a human head," he said, "with the skull bone removed, shrunken, stuffed and preserved. The Nazis had one of their many victims decapitated after having him hanged, apparently for fraternization with a German woman, and fashioned this terrible ornament from his head." The last paragraph of the official United States Army Report from which the Prosecutor read to the Tribunal said: "There (in Buchenwald) I also saw the shrunken heads of two young Poles who had been hanged for having relations with German girls. The heads were the size of a fist and the hair and the marks of the rope were still there."

These, of course, were the private hobbies of concentration-camp commandants and, as in the case of Buchenwald, of the commandant's sadistic wife, Frau Ilse Koch. It is true that much later, as the result of an internal S.S. intrigue, Koch and his wife were removed from Buchenwald and temporarily arrested on Himmler's orders. "Himmler," one of his *aides* said in 1950, "did not approve of cruelty . . . there were so few people in concentration camps when the war started." Records which were put before the Reichsfuehrer S.S. showed that Dachau held four thousand prisoners, Sachsenhausen six thousand five hundred, Buchenwald five thousand three hundred, Mauthausen one thousand five hundred, Flossenburg (which became known as a death factory) one thousand six hundred, and Ravensbrueck (for women only) two thousand five hundred—a total of twenty-one thousand four hundred. A year later the prison population had increased to forty-four thousand six hundred. But that was a small figure indeed, as far as Himmler was concerned. "Himmler did not approve of cruelty. . . ." No, Himmler's mind was set on a course of action of which "cruelty" would certainly be a most inadequate description.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

EXTERMINATION

ABOUT the beginning of 1941 twelve high S.S. leaders received a call from Himmler to gather at the Wewelsburg for an important meeting. Reinhard Heydrich was there, so was Karl Wolff, S.S. General Daluege, Gottlob Berger and others. One of the intimate circle at this privileged occasion was Obergruppenfuehrer Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, Himmler's expert on *Bandenkrieg* (partisan warfare), who had designed a strategy against partisans and every other possible form of resistance behind the lines of the Eastern Front. A First World War officer who stayed in Germany's post-war army of one hundred thousand selected experts, Zelewski joined the Nazi Party in 1930, became a member of the Reichstag and one of Himmler's trusted military advisers. Like so many S.S. leaders, Zelewski insisted after Hitler's war that he had strongly disapproved of many S.S. measures, even of some to which he had been an active party.

It was Bach-Zelewski who gave an account of the Wewelsburg conference of early 1941 and of Himmler's most secret address to his senior officers. Although most of them were aware of German military preparations which could have no other purpose than an aggressive war against Russia, they had no official information about Hitler's plans until Heinrich Himmler bluntly revealed to them that the Fuehrer had decided to strike a mortal blow at Russian Communism and to smash the Soviet Union: "War against Russia will start this summer," Himmler told them, and clearly set out for their benefit Germany's principal war aim: "The purpose of the Russian campaign," he said, according to Bach-Zewelski, "is to reduce the Slav population by thirty millions. . . ."

Thirty million people . . . thirty million dead bodies. Thirty million men, women and children. . . . Psychologists have tried to analyse the mind which conceived this idea and boldly set about translating it into action. What went on in Himmler's mind? "These people are vermin," he was fond of saying when he discussed such inferior types as Jews, Poles or Russians. "They are not human beings. . . ." Did he really believe it? Was there no twinge of conscience? No doubt? No fear? Did he have any appreciation of the enormity of this action which he now began to organize as part of

Germany's political and military strategy? Questions to a hundred former S.S. leaders—and who else would be in close enough contact with Himmler to be able to answer them?—have produced no satisfactory answer. Many of the answers were carefully framed to show that the decision was Himmler's and Himmler's alone, and that he did not discuss the matter with anybody. Not with anybody? Karl Wolff was still his loyal friend and adjutant. "He never said it," Wolff declared blandly. "Bach-Zelewski has misquoted Himmler. The Reichsfuehrer only mentioned that war with Russia might result in millions of dead. . . ."

But, then, the close phalanx of Himmler's *aides* has been disrupted by disputes over "responsibility." Wolff told me that people like Eichniann, Wisliceny, Pohl are the real villains of the piece. . . . They were all dead or missing. "It was Heydrich's ferocity which was responsible for the fate of the Jews!" Wolff said with emphasis. Heydrich, of course, was a convenient whipping-boy. On the other hand, from Landsberg prison, where he lay under sentence of death, Oswold Pohl—who has since been executed—sent out an open letter saying that all the crimes of which he had been accused were—Wolff's. Although repeating that he knew nothing, absolutely nothing about the plan for a massacre of the Jews or Russians, Wolff said that Himmler, whenever the subject of Jewry was raised, recalled the Spanish Inquisition as a precedent. "If the Catholic Church had not had the courage to do these things," he quoted Himmler as saying, "it would not have survived!" He hated the Catholic Church, Wolff added, but was never averse to attempts to emulate its example as he saw it. "What the Jesuits did for Rome," Himmler was fond of saying, "the S.S. must do for the Nazi Party!" What he meant was to exorcise the unbelievers. "It is quite true," Wolff added, "that whenever he spoke of Jews or Russians Himmler raved and said: 'We must do away with this vermin!'"

There was a period in Himmler's life, Wolff recalled, when he seemed oppressed by deep thoughts as if engaged in an inner struggle and wrestling with himself to come to a decision. It was obviously, Wolff believes in retrospect, THE DECISION. Often, in these days, when he saw his chief almost breaking down under the weight of his thoughts, he, Wolff, implored him to confide in him. "Relieve your mind, Reichsfuehrer," he said; "I may be able to help you." Himmler refused. "This is something which I must settle by myself," he was supposed to have said. Wolff believes that in these weeks of contemplation Himmler gathered strength for his decision —to liquidate all Jews in his power, to decimate the Russians, to exterminate the Polish and Czech intelligentsia so that the eastern people should be left leaderless and politically impotent. Other S.S. leaders now seem to remember having experienced similar

phases in Himmler's life. "There are certain things I must do for the Fuehrer," he pondered. "I must do them so that the great German Messiah's work can continue undisturbed and live for thousands of years. . . ."

"No, no, no," protests Wolff, "that did not refer to extermination. Himmler would not exterminate anyone. Why, his plan had always been to settle the Jews in Madagascar or somewhere, get them to emigrate, you know . . . get the rich ones to pay for the poor. Quite legitimate, very charitable." The eastern people? Even Rosenberg wanted to win them over for collaboration with Germany. Too true! Rosenberg, the apostle of eastern conquest, was severely shaken when he realized that his friend Himmler's policy was alienating the eastern people's feelings, and tried to reverse it.

A careful corroboration of all the evidence emerging from the smoke-screen behind which the surviving S.S. gang is still trying to hide these facts produces a simpler solution. Though his physical complaints, his headaches and stomach cramps got worse as the time went on, "practice" in dealing with these monstrous problems, the habit of making decisions which involved the death of thousands no doubt gradually resulted in an atrophy of conscience until he failed to react in a normal manner to any subject connected with his preconceived notions of "race." Just as a farmer has no hesitation in taking the most drastic measures to wipe out an agricultural pest, just as flame-throwers might be employed against an invasion of locusts—kill them or they will destroy your land, your food!—so Himmler looked upon the Jews and the Slavs and failed to feel any compunction, far less sympathy or mercy, towards them. But it was a carefully cultivated insensitivity. In 1946 Bach-Zelewski was asked whether he considered that Himmler's demand for the extermination of thirty million Slavs was his personal opinion or whether it corresponded to the National Socialist ideology. "Today I believe," was Zelewski's answer, "that it was the logical consequence of our ideology. . . . If for years, for decades, a doctrine is preached to the effect that the Slav race is an inferior race, that the Jews are not even human beings, then an explosion of this sort is inevitable. . . ."

Zelewski is in prison and has ten years' time to ponder his part in the attempt to carry out Himmler's programme. In the weeks before the Wehrmacht received the signal to invade Russia he and Himmler were busy men. Their work was concerned with the organization of efficient *Einsatzgruppen* (Action Groups) to perform the proposed mass extermination. To kill thirty million people is no easy job. Already there had been small actions of the sort Himmler had in mind, but there was a regrettable lack of preparation and the accompanying factors of the operations threatened to endanger the whole programme. There had been shootings in

Poland, but German Army doctors had protested that "since these shootings were done publicly, enemy propaganda may derive much material. . . ." It had also come to Himmler's knowledge that witnesses of the shootings had sent reports to Hitler's Chancellery and, although the Fuehrer had not seen them personally, there was clearly something amiss with his technique.

One of those who had written to Hitler, for instance, was Paul Kluge, a corporal in a German medical unit, stationed at Schwetz. He had heard, he wrote, that a shooting of Poles would take place on Sunday, 8 October, 1939. Out of curiosity he decided to visit the place of execution in the Jewish cemetery. "We were of the opinion," Kluge wrote, "that we were the victims of silly rumours, and about to return to barracks . . . when suddenly a large bus full of women and children drove into the cemetery. We saw a party consisting of a woman with three children, aged from three to eight years, led to an open grave about two metres wide and eight metres long. The woman was forced to descend into this grave and took the youngest child with her in her arms. Two men, members of the punitive expedition, handed the other two children to her. The woman was forced to lie, face down, in the grave, and beside her the three children in the same manner on her left. After that four men of the detachment also climbed down into the grave, aimed their guns so that the barrels were about thirty centimetres away from the napes of their necks. Thus they shot the woman and her three children. . . . Then the chief of the detachment called on me to help fill in the grave. I obeyed this order and, being quite near, I could see the next party of women and children being shot in the same manner. . . . In all there were nine or ten groups of women and children, all shot in the same way, four at a time in the same grave. . . ."

Angrily Himmler discussed this letter with his *aides*. "Amateurish," he said. "There is no need to call in outsiders to help!" From concentration camps, too, came evidence that extermination was as yet being approached in a haphazard, playful manner. Surely this was not a game for bored concentration-camp guards! Take Mauthausen, where Alois Hoellrigel of the S.S. Death Head Brigade, when on guard on a tower overlooking the quarry one day early in 1941, observed what he thought to be six or eight prisoners with two of his S.S. comrades moving to the top of the quarry and making strange gestures. "I saw that they were approaching the precipice near the quarry," he said, "and I saw that the S.S. men were beating the prisoners. I realized immediately that they intended to force them to throw themselves over the precipice or else to push them over. I noticed that one of the prisoners was kicked while lying on the ground. . . ." The gestures of the S.S. men indicated that they wanted him to throw himself into the abyss. "This the

prisoner did under the pressure of blows . . ." Hoellrigel explained. Eventually all six—or eight—went down a drop of over one hundred feet, falling to their death. "In Mauthausen," added Hoellrigel, "this was a regular sport. Yes, there was a term used among the guards for these jumpers. . . . They were called paratroopers!"

That was not good enough. At that rate and in such a manner it might take decades until thirty million Slavs, plus a few million Jews, could be disposed of. Into his office Heinrich Himmler called a young member of the S.S. élite, a thirty-year-old economist who had gained a reputation for himself in the Economic Department under Oswald Pohl. The young S.S. officer was Otto Ohlendorf, a good-looking, quiet, modest fellow, well-spoken, with subtle, expressive gestures. "Ohlendorf," Himmler said, "you have often asked to be transferred to active service. I am granting your request. You will be in charge of one of my four *Einsatzgruppen* in the East. . . ."

At the same time a top-secret document signed by Himmler was taken by special messenger from his office in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse to the Kurfuerstenstrasse 116 and handed personally to the chief of Section IVA4b of the Gestapo, which was housed in this building. The chief was Karl Eichmann, an Austrian whose family came from Linz, and his section was the department dealing with all problems concerning Jews. The details of the document have never been disclosed and it disappeared after the war, together with Eichmann, whose fate is unknown and who is presumed to be dead. He was very much alive in the spring of 1941 when that document was put on his desk. It contained Himmler's orders to prepare for the "final solution" of the Jewish question, for *Aktion 14 F 13*, which would become necessary with the conquest of large Soviet Russian territories, chiefly the Ukraine. According to Himmler, Russia was "infested with Jews." There was going to be close co-operation between Ohlendorf, other Action Group commanders and Eichmann's office.

Events proceeded very much as Himmler and his staff had anticipated. At 4 a.m. on 22 June Germany invaded the U.S.S.R. Three German army groups, supported by strong Luftwaffe forces, moved rapidly across the Russian plain and, though the retreating Soviet Army ruthlessly scorched the earth to deprive the invaders of the spoils of their conquest, millions of the hapless inhabitants of the conquered territories stayed behind as the Soviet evacuated Smolensk, withdrew from Pervomaisk and Kirovograd, pulled back across the Dnieper, abandoned Kingisepp, north-east of Lake Peipus, fought staunchly, but unsuccessfully, for Novgorod and Gomel, counter-attacked at Odessa, lost Tallinn, heroically defended Leningrad. . . . There is no need today to follow the see-saw of the war in the East in every detail. After forty-five days' battle

the Germans occupied Kiev on 19 September and on 2 October Hitler issued his notorious Order of the Day to the Wehrmacht advancing on Moscow: "Today is the beginning of the last great decisive battle of this year!" Vyasma fell, Bryansk fell, the Germans captured Taganrog on the Sea of Azov, Kharkov and Rostov were focal points of valiant Russian counter-offensives, and Rostov, having been lost, was retaken. As the year drew to a close a special Russian announcement hailed the failure of the German Army, caught in the Russian winter, in their attempt to take Moscow. The eyes of the world were on the tremendous clash between two formidable armies, yet a drama, unequalled in modern history, was being played out behind the German lines in the occupied eastern territory into which Himmler's S.S., his police regiments, the Security Service and the Gestapo, together with Bach-Zelewski's anti-partisan units, moved as the heralds of the Reichsfuehrer's philosophy and political programme.

Ohlendorf's Action Group comprised a personnel of nine hundred and ninety. There were three hundred and forty members of the *Waffen* S.S., one hundred and seventy-two drivers, thirty-five Security Service men, forty-one officials of the Criminal Police, eighty-nine Gestapo agents and one hundred and thirty-three Order Police. The rest was made up of administrative personnel, wireless operators and a few female employees. Soon we shall see them go into action, sometimes side by side with a special unit which became known as the Dirlewanger Brigade, and was formed in 1941. Originally a battalion, it was strengthened until it became a regiment and later a brigade. "The idea was," said Zelewski, "that we should get experienced poachers from prisons and concentration camps as the most likely fellows to be able to track down the partisans in their forest hideouts. For the most part it consisted of previously convicted criminals. . . ." Zelewski sat in conference with such eminent and dignified German Army leaders as General Bremer, Field-Marshal Kuechler, Generals Kluge and Busch, Field-Marshal Baron von Weichs and Luftwaffe General Kitzinger, to discuss the employment of the Dirlewanger Brigade, when already the poachers had been joined by burglars, murderers had followed the cracksmen, and criminals convicted for violence, gangsters from Berlin's underworld, had proudly donned German uniform and strengthened this unique formation of the Wehrmacht.

The Dirlewanger Brigade and Ohlendorf's Action Group had a high time. Acting on Himmler's verbal instructions, they went into action, as Ohlendorf later said, to carry out his order for the liquidation of Jews and other inferior elements. Ohlendorf was equipped with an agreement between the High Command of Army and Wehrmacht on the one hand and the S.S. on the other. It had been negotiated by Walter Schellenberg on behalf of Himmler and

Reinhard Heydrich, and stipulated, according to Ohlendorf, that the representatives of the Security Police and Security Service, in command of the Action Groups, would be assigned to the German armies in the East. Though the Action Groups would receive their instructions from Himmler, army commanders would be responsible for their movements and supply. Apart from Ohlendorf's Group D there were three other Action Groups—commanded by Stahlecker, Arthur Nebe and Dr. Rascher (later Dr. Thomas). Ohlendorf was later replaced by S.S. leader Bierkamp.

Ohlendorf's Group operated in the southern Ukraine and was attached to the German Eleventh Army under General Schober. The commander has later and in detail described the route which it took after leaving Pietra Nemsk in Rumania on 21 June, with the order to arrest and to liquidate all Jews and also all active Communists, particularly those recognized as commissars. Orders soon began to pour in from Himmler's office and from the headquarters of General Baron Schober and, later, Field-Marshal Manstein. There were to be no more incidents like the one which had caused Corporal Kluge to complain to Hitler's office. "At Nikolaiev," Ohlendorf said, "an order from Eleventh Army reached me stating that liquidations were to take place only at a distance of not less than two hundred kilometres from the headquarters of the commanding general." The generals were anxious for the liquidations to be carried out with speed, but they did not want to be contaminated with the nasty business. "In Simferopol," Ohlendorf said, "the Army Command requested the *Einsatzgruppen* in this area to hasten the liquidation because famine was threatening and there was a great housing shortage." Ohlendorf did good work. When he was asked whether he knew how many persons were liquidated by *Einsatzgruppe D* under his command, he did not hesitate before replying gently: "In the year between June, 1941, to June, 1942, the *Einsatzgruppe* reported ninety thousand people liquidated." Yes, that did include men, women and children.

The activities of Group D are illustrated by a letter, dated 2 December, 1941, which reached General Thomas, Chief of the Army's Economic Department: "A matter which gives rise to serious anxiety is . . . the Jewish problem . . . in the Ukraine. The elimination of the Jews," the writer said, "had far-reaching economic consequences." The rest of the letter, which was produced as evidence in Nuremberg, is all the more revealing because it proves how well Army authorities were acquainted with the position. "The attitude of the Jews," the letter went on, "was anxious—obliging from the beginning. They tried to avoid everything that might displease the German administration. That they hated the German administration and Army inwardly goes without saying and cannot be surprising. However, there is no proof that Jewry as

a whole, or even to a greater part, was implicated in acts of sabotage. . . . Surely there were some terrorists or saboteurs among them, just as among the Ukrainians. But it cannot be said that the Jews as such represented a danger to the German Armed Forces. The output produced by Jews, who, of course, were prompted by nothing but the feelings of fear, was satisfactory to the troops and the German administration.

"The Jewish population remained temporarily unmolested shortly after the fighting. Only weeks, sometimes months later, specially detached formations of police executed a planned shooting of Jews. This action as a rule proceeded from east to west. It was done entirely in public with the use of the Ukrainian militia; and, unfortunately, in many instances, also with members of the Armed Forces taking part voluntarily. The way these actions, which included men and old men, women, and children of all ages, were carried out was horrible. The great masses executed make this action more gigantic than any similar measure taken so far in the Soviet Union. So far about one hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred thousand Jews may have been executed in the part of the Ukraine belonging to the Reichskommissariat; no consideration was given to the interests of economy." As a result, it was stated, superfluous eaters were eliminated, but also needed tradesmen; the shooting had a bad and brutalizing effect on the troops.

Reports of this kind kept coming into the offices of leading Nazis, Army generals, Reich Commissars. A German officer supplied the information on which a description of events in the town of Sluzk, district of Minsk, was based: "On 27 October," this officer recorded, "in the morning at about eight o'clock, a first-lieutenant of the Police (S.S.) Battalion No. 11 appeared and introduced himself as the adjutant of the Security Police Battalion Commander. He explained that the battalion had received the order to liquidate all Jews in the town of Sluzk within two days. The battalion, in strength of four companies, two of which were made up of Lithuanians, was on the march here and the action would have to begin instantly. I replied that I had to discuss this first with the commander. About half an hour later the police battalion arrived and the conference with the battalion commander took place. I explained that it would not very well be possible to effect the action without preparation because everybody had been sent to work and terrible confusion would ensue. At least one day's notice was required and I requested him to postpone the action. He refused with the remark that he had to carry out this action in all towns and that only two days were allotted for Sluzk, within which the town had by all means to be cleared of Jews. . . ."

The local officer having been overruled by the commander of the liquidation battalion, the action duly took place. "As regards the

execution," he stated, "I must point out to my deepest regret that the latter almost bordered on sadism. The town itself during the action offered a picture of horror. With indescribable brutality on the part both of German police officers and Lithuanians, the Jewish people, and with them also White Ruthenians, were taken out of their dwellings and herded together. Everywhere in the town shots were to be heard as in different streets the corpses of Jews who had been shot accumulated. The White Ruthenians were in the greatest anguish to free themselves from the encirclement. In addition to the fact that the Jews . . . were barbarously maltreated in sight of the White Ruthenian people, the White Ruthenians themselves were also beaten with clubs and rifle butts. It was no longer a question of an action against the Jews, it looked much more like a revolution."

And he concluded by saying he felt obliged to point out that the police battalion looted in an unheard-of manner during the action . . . anything of use, such as boots, leather, cloth, gold or other valuables, was taken away. Watches were torn off the arms of Jews openly on the streets and the rings pulled off their fingers in the most brutal manner. . . . A Jewish girl was asked by the police to obtain immediately five thousand roubles to have her father released. This girl . . . actually . . . ran about everywhere to obtain the money.

It was easy to track down the Jews. They had been gathered in ghettoes to be ready for slaughter or deportation when the *Einsatzgruppe* arrived. The manager of a Ukrainian branch of a German building firm described what happened at the Rovno Ghetto, inhabited by five thousand Jews, a hundred of whom worked for his firm. Hearing rumours that the liquidation of the Rovno Jews was imminent, and anxious to retain his Jewish workers, he ordered them to be marched away so that they should be safe from the impending pogrom. Soon he was summoned to the presence of S.S. Major Dr. Puetz, who told him that the rumour was untrue and that he should bring back these Jews. An hour later, however, another S.S. officer admitted that the pogrom would take place on the following Monday. Hurriedly the anxious business man went to the Territorial Commissar of Rovno, from whom he obtained a written order that: "The Jewish workers employed by your firm are not affected by the *Aktion.* You must transfer them to a new place by Wednesday at the latest." He found a house in which he thought the hundred Jews would be safe and together with a colleague, Fritz Einsporn, he posted himself as a guard in front of the house. "Shortly after 10 p.m.," he said, "the ghetto was encircled by a large S.S. detachment and about three times as many members of the Ukrainian militia. Then electric arc-lights which had been erected in and around the ghetto were switched on. S.S. and militia

squads of four to six men entered houses. . . . Where the doors and windows were closed, and the inhabitants did not open, the S.S. men broke the windows, forced the doors with beams and crowbars and entered the house, driving the people on to the streets just as they were, whether they were dressed or in bed. . . . The Jews in most cases refused to leave their houses and resisted, and the S.S. and militia applied force. They finally succeeded with whips, kicks and blows with rifle butts in clearing the houses—it happened in such haste that many small children in bed were left behind. . . . In the streets women cried out for their children and children for their parents. S.S. drove the people along the road at running pace . . . hitting them until they reached the waiting freight train. Coach after coach was filled as the screaming of women and children and the cracking of whips and rifle shots resounded unceasingly. Since families or groups had barricaded themselves in strong buildings, where the doors could not be forced, they were blown open with hand-grenades. . . . Younger people tried to get across the railway tracks and over a small river to get away. Part of the area was illuminated by rockets. . . . All through the night these beaten, hounded and wounded people moved along. . . . Women carried their dead children in their arms, children pulled and dragged their dead parents by their arms and legs down the road towards the train. . . . Again and again the cries 'Open the door, open the door,' echoed through the ghetto."

The harassed builder had to leave his post at the entrance of his workers' house for a short while. He returned just in time to save them from the fate of the others. Seven had already been snatched by the S.S. and had been taken to a collecting point. His written authority protected the others and he went to the collecting point to plead for the seven men. "In the streets along which I had to walk," he said, "I saw dozens of corpses of all ages and both sexes. Pieces of clothing, shoes, stockings, jackets, hats, coats, were lying in the streets. At the corner of a house lay a baby less than a year old with its skull crushed. Blood and brains were scattered over the house wall. The child was dressed only in a little shirt. The S.S. commander, Major Puetz, was walking up and down a row of about eighty to a hundred male Jews, who were crouching on the ground. He had a heavy dog-whip in his hand. Recognizing the seven men among them I showed Puetz the written permit. . . . He was furious and said nothing could persuade him to release the seven men. With a motion of his hand, encircling the square, he said that anyone who was once here would not get away. . . . When I left Dr. Puetz I noticed a farm cart with two horses. Dead people with stiff limbs were lying on the cart, legs and arms projecting over the side board. The cart was making for the freight train. . . ."

All over tortured Russia these raids went on day after day,

according to schedule. Jews and Communists were herded together. Some Jews were allowed to work, marked with the Star of David. having paid small fortunes to German labour officials in order to acquire certificates of labour—expensive, short but precious respites from certain death. In many cases they could count on support from their German employers, whose profit depended on their work. That Himmler would not tolerate. He issued instructions to the local S.S. and police leaders to take over the entire disposition of Jewish labour. Existing agencies were dissolved, all certificates declared invalid. "The Jews," said a report to Himmler's office, "were exposed to special treatment." All through 1941 and 1942 the massacre continued until it reached a horrible climax with the epic story of the Warsaw Ghetto.

There is no need to rely on eye-witness accounts of the few Jews who managed to escape the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto and whose graphic description of the horrible events may be thought to bear the stamp of justified hatred of Himmler and his murderous agents. There is in existence a book called *The Warsaw Ghetto is No More*, whose author is S.S. Major-General Stroop, and which, according to the American Chief Prosecutor at Nuremberg, Mr. Justice Robert H. Jackson, is written "with a Teutonic devotion to detail, illustrated with photographs . . . beautifully bound in leather with the loving care bestowed on a proud work." In this report Stroop describes the hardships—not of the Jews whom he murdered, but of his S.S. men, who, he said, performed heroic deeds in the course of the operation. "The resistance put up by Jews and bandits (in Warsaw Ghetto)," wrote Stroop, "could only be suppressed by energetic actions of our troops day and night. The Reichsfuehrer S.S. ordered, therefore . . . the cleaning out of the ghetto with utter ruthlessness and merciless tenacity. I decided to destroy and burn down the entire ghetto. . . ."

There were factories in the neighbourhood, but Stroop thought that it would be worth while destroying these factories if they were in the way of his operation. "The factories," he continued, "were systematically dismantled and then burnt. Jews usually left their hideouts, but frequently remained in the burning buildings and jumped out of the windows only when the heat became unbearable. They then tried to crawl with broken bones across the street into buildings which were not afire. Sometimes they changed their hideouts during the night into the ruins of burnt buildings. Life in the sewers was not pleasant after the first week. Many times we could hear loud voices . . . S.S. men or policemen climbed bravely through the manholes to capture these Jews. Sometimes they stumbled over Jewish corpses, sometimes they were shot at. Tear-gas bombs were thrown into the manholes and the Jews driven out of the sewers and captured. . . ."

Even after the war many Germans described the stories of Jewish persecution as inventions of the victorious Allies. Though there have been "revelations" of life under the Nazi régime, General Stroop's report has not been given publicity in post-war Germany. Let us read on. "Countless numbers of Jews were liquidated in the sewers and bunkers through blasting. The longer the resistance continued . . ." (resistance to death by blasting) ". . . the tougher became the members of the *Waffen* S.S. Police and Wehrmacht, who always discharged their duties in an exemplary manner. Frequently Jews who tried to replenish their food supplies during the night or to communicate with neighbouring groups were exterminated. This action," S.S. General Stroop concluded proudly, "eliminated a proved total of fifty-six thousand and sixty-five. To that we have to add the number killed through blasting, which cannot be counted."

Originally the Warsaw Ghetto, established in 1940, was inhabited by four hundred thousand Jews, who shared a total of twenty-seven thousand apartments, with an average of two and a half rooms each. The ghetto was separated from the rest of the city by partitions and walling-up of thoroughfares, windows, doors and all open spaces. Over three hundred thousand Jews were deported between 1940 and 1942 to various concentration and extermination camps. Those who remained had to subsist on half of the lowest ration issued to the Polish population. Epidemics broke out, yet the Jews, thrown on their own resources, fought them bravely and reduced the heavy toll which sickness and exhaustion took of the ageing, until only the fittest survived, some sixty thousand, to fight for their lives when Himmler's order to wipe them out reached S.S. General Stroop and his hordes. The Jews fought the S.S. with bare hands, with sticks and iron bars, with a few guns which they had managed to hide. Listen once more to Stroop, who can hardly find words in praise of the butchers whom he commanded. "The longer the resistance lasted," he repeated, "the tougher the men of the *Waffen* S.S. became. They fulfilled their duty indefatigably in faithful comradeship and stood together as models and examples of soldiers. Their duty hours often lasted from early morning until late at night. At night search patrols with rags bound around their feet remained at the heels of the Jews and gave them no respite. . . . Considering that the greater part of the men of the *Waffen* S.S. had only been trained for three to four weeks before being assigned to this action, high credit should be given to the pluck, courage and devotion to duty which they showed. . . . Officers and men of the police, a large part of whom had already been at the front, again excelled by their dashing spirit."

Fifty-six thousand Jews were killed like rats in the sewers.

Smoked out, burnt out, blasted, they were hounded day and night by men armed with the most modern weapons and by Army engineers equipped with explosives, always eager to put fire to a fuse. But Stroop thought only of the sacrifices which his men made in this horrific action. "For the Fuehrer and their country," he recorded, "the following fell in the battle for the destruction of Jews and bandits in the former Jewish residential area of Warsaw. They gave their utmost, their lives. We shall never forget them. . . ." How many? How many S.S. men fell for Fuehrer and Fatherland while murdering fifty-six thousand human beings? Stroop's list includes fifteen names. Repeat: fifteen names!

Day by day Stroop sent teletype messages to Himmler, who followed his action against Warsaw Ghetto with mounting interest. A number of these messages have been found, among them one dated 22 April, 1943: "Our setting the block on fire achieved the result in the course of the night that those Jews whom we had not been able to find despite all our search operations left their hideouts under the roofs, in the cellars, and elsewhere, and appeared on the outside of the building, trying to escape the flames anyhow. Masses of them—entire families—were already aflame and jumped from the windows or endeavoured to let themselves down by means of sheets tied together or the like. Steps had been taken so that these Jews as well as the remaining ones were liquidated at once."

What did the individual S.S. men think about all this—for it is impossible to believe that among the million men who eventually served under the sign of the S.S. there were not a few basically decent fellows. . . . There was published in Germany in 1948 a book[1], "the first book about the *Waffen* S.S."—the dust-cover proudly proclaims, "A World Success"—which at least throws a little light on some aspects of the subject. The author, an S.S. man, hints at the feelings of some of his comrades who, having joined the S.S. to earn laurels in the war, were assigned to the Death Head Brigades and to service as concentration-camp guards. "I was hoping to be sent to the front," he quotes one such S.S. character as saying, "but instead I was attached to a concentration-camp guard regiment. Since then I have been unable to sleep. . . . Concentration-camp guard for one year. . . . You know . . . much that has been said is untrue and exaggerated. But what is true . . . is grim enough. I had become friendly with a prisoner, a Polish university professor. 'Shoot me, please!' he implored me several times, and walked towards the forbidden zone. 'Stop!' I shouted, and closed my eyes. . . . Then, my comrade shot . . . I wrote to the Reichsfuehrer. I pleaded I wanted

[1] *Der Grosse Rausch*, by Erich Kern (Verlag Lothar Leberecht, Waiblingen, Württemberg).

to go to the front, I did not want to be a prison guard. . . ."

This is as far as one S.S. man would go in his admission. But as he accompanied the *Waffen* S.S. deeper into Russia his mind dwelt on some of the curious contradictions of Himmler's policy which he was there to implement. "What is to be done with the mountain Jews of Daghestan," he asked himself, and discussed the question with his comrades, "once we reach Machatcha Kala?" It appeared—and S.S. men were well instructed on such historical phenomena — that around A.D. 1000 many mountain tribes of Daghestan, the East Caucasian plateau, pure Aryans, had embraced the Jewish faith. Since they did not mix racially with other tribes or Jews and yet remained faithful to the Jewish religion, they were "pure Aryan" Jews. Ethnographers, the well-informed S.S. men noted, insist that the Daghestan Mountain Jews are of pure Gothic descent. Are they Aryans or are they Jews, he asked himself and his comrades. Are they to be regarded as friends or foes? Should they be exterminated?

Aryans or Jews—the good people of Daghestan survived. "Military developments," noted the puzzled S.S. man, "relieved our theoreticians of any possible conflict of conscience. We never reached Daghestan. . . ."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE DEATH-ROLL MOUNTS

In autumn, 1942, Himmler, the Nazi Press reported, went to Lublin, where he met S.S. Leader Globocnik, the Austrian, who had been installed as local Gauleiter. *Der Voelkischer Beobachter* reported that the "Reichsfuehrer S.S. decorated Globocnik and thanked him for the services which he had rendered." I asked Wolff whether he had accompanied Himmler on this trip. "I cannot remember!" was Wolff's reply. It is, in fact, impossible to trace anybody who was with Himmler on this occasion. "Globocnik . . . oh, yes!" they say. "We remember—he was Gauleiter in Vienna . . . !" "Lublin?" Not a single surviving S.S. man admits to ever having been in Lublin. It was something they have "heard of"; yes, it has been mentioned—there were rumours. . . . The explanation is quite simple: Lublin was the centre of the extermination activity which had drawn ever-wider circles. Long before he went to Lublin, Himmler had studied and finally approved plans for novel technical installations to speed up extermination. New death-chambers had been installed at Maidaneck and Treblinka concentration camps to facilitate the destruction of the Jewish population and the indigenous intelligentsia of Poland and the Ukraine. To these two camps were sent the majority of Jews, train load after train load, who had survived S.S. actions, like those in Sluzk, Warsaw and a hundred other cities. A Polish Government Commission which investigated these camps after the war stated that: "late in April, 1942, the erection of the gas-chambers was completed in Treblinka . . . here these general massacres were performed by means of steam. Somewhat later the erection of the real death-building, which contained ten death-chambers, was finished. It was opened for wholesale murders early in the autumn of 1942. . . . The average number of Jews dealt with at the camp in the summer of 1942 was about two railway transports daily, but there were days of much higher efficiency."

It must be considered that considerable organizational skill was required to time the round-ups, have the transport available, provide for speedy extermination at the camps. "After unloading in the siding," recorded the Polish investigators who questioned

hundreds of witnesses, Germans and Jews, "all victims were assembled in one place, where men were separated from women and children. In the first days of the existence of the camp, the victims were made to believe that, after a short stay in the camp, necessary for bathing and disinfection, they would be sent farther east for work. Explanations of this sort were given by S.S. men who assisted at the unloading of the transports and further explanations could be read in notices stuck up on the walls of the barracks. But later, when more transports had to be dealt with, the Germans dropped all pretences and only tried to accelerate the procedure. . . ."

Ohlendorf explained in interrogation that there was considerable excitement and the men of his *Einsatzgruppe* had to resort to beating so that the executions could be carried out in an orderly manner. In the concentration camp of Maidaneck the procedure had been developed to a fine art. The Polish Commission reported: "All victims had to strip off their clothes and shoes, which were collected afterwards, whereupon all victims, women and children first, were driven into the death-chambers. Those too slow or too weak to move quickly were driven in by rifle butts, by whipping and kicking, often by the camp commandant—Sauer—himself. Many slipped and fell; the next victims pressed forward and stumbled after them. Small children were simply thrown inside. After being filled up to capacity, the chambers were hermetically sealed and steam was let in. In a few minutes all was over. The Jewish menial workers had to remove the bodies . . . and to bury them in mass graves. By and by, as new transports arrived, the cemetery grew . . . from reports received it may be assumed that several hundred thousands of Jews have been exterminated in Treblinka." The report continues to describe in detail the procedure and "turnover" in other camps. Here, on the record, is the incredible achievement of the extermination machine of Birkenau. It cannot be described better than in the words used by the American prosecutor in Nuremberg, who said: "I have been assured that the figure printed in this report is not a typographical error. The number shown is 1,765,000." One million seven hundred and sixty-five thousand. Do you remember Frank mentioning that there were three million five hundred thousand Jews in the Government General of Poland? In his diary was found an entry under the date of 28 February, 1944. "At the present time," he wrote, "we have still in the Government General perhaps one hundred thousand Jews. . . ."

When the Wehrmacht suffered the first reverses in the East the fate of German prisoners in Russian hands began to worry some of the generals. Too many of their troops had seen how Russian prisoners of war had been treated by the S.S., how "police regi-

ments" had played havoc with the civilian population. Suggestions were put forward that it may be wise to come to some agreement on the lines of a Red Cross convention—Russia did not subscribe to this convention—and when they came to Hitler's ear he said: "Let Himmler deal with this. . . ."

"I will not make any agreement involving the verminous Russians," Himmler said coldly. "I will not allow my men to be restricted in their dealings with these sub-human types. . . ." His words were handed down through the channels of the S.S. command until every S.S. recruit was familiar with them. It is not surprising under the circumstances that Soviet civilians and prisoners of war were subjected to the same treatment as the Jews. From the available evidence it is only necessary to select a few typical incidents, like the one that occurred on the road from Vyasma to Smolensk, along which a long column of Soviet prisoners was driven by German guards. "Many of the prisoners," says one Russian report, "were unable to walk as a result of continuous beating and exhaustion. On the Bolshaya Sovetskaya Street . . . the Black Guards opened a disorderly fire on the column. The prisoners attempted to escape, but the S.S. men overtook and shot them. In that way nearly five thousand were fatally shot. The corpses were left lying about the streets for several days. . . . In the prisoner-of-war camp Number 126 . . . sick men were sent to heavy labour; no medical assistance was rendered. The prisoners in the camp were . . . forced to do work beyond their strength. About one hundred and fifty to two hundred died every day of starvation, typhus and dysentery epidemics, freezing to death. Over sixty thousand prisoners of war were exterminated in the camp. . . ."

Individual S.S. men were named and their activity noted. "Sergeant Gatlyn . . . being aware that prisoners kept out of his way . . . dressed in the uniform of a Soviet soldier and mixed with the prisoners and, having picked himself a victim, would beat him half dead. Private Rudolf Radtke prepared a special lash made of aluminium wire with which to beat the prisoners. . . . Exhausted and starving prisoners forced to work were immediately shot when they failed. The murders were committed by Sonderfuehrer Szepalsky, Bram, Hoffmann, Mauser. . . . There was in Smolensk a hospital for prisoners of war . . . the patients lay unbandaged on the floor, their clothes covered with dirt and pus. The rooms were unheated and the floors and corridors covered with ice." It all contributed towards the Himmler total of thirty million. . . .

Graves were found after the war and it appeared that burials were on a mass scale. "The bodies," says the report, "were placed in each grave at the rate of three hundred and fifty to four hundred corpses in layers, one on top of another. . . . The number of graves, their size and the number of bodies discovered justify us in believ-

ing that from ten thousand to twelve thousand bodies of Soviet war prisoners were buried in this area . . . burial must have taken place in the late autumn or winter 1941-2." Such death-rate was achieved by calculated methods. Dr. H. I. Zvetkov, an inmate of a prisoner-of-war camp near Orel, testified that: "the food ration contained a maximum of seven hundred calories, and led, when work was hard and beyond the strength of the prisoners, to complete exhaustion of the organism and to death. . . . The German camp doctors declared that the diet was satisfactory and denied that the oedemata from which so many prisoners died was due to starvation. . . . The very mention of the term 'hunger oedema' was forbidden. . . . Mortality in the camp assumed mass proportions. Of the total number of persons murdered, three thousand died of starvation and the complications arising from malnutrition. . . . The prisoners lived in indescribably appalling conditions. The overcrowding was incredible. Fuel and water were completely lacking. Everything was infested by vermin. Fifty to eighty people were crammed into a ward fifteen to twenty square metres in size. Prisoners would die at the rate of five or six per ward and the living would have to sleep on the dead."

Jews, Russians — what was the difference? Paul Gottlieb Waldmann, a Security Service member of Ohlendorf's *Einsatzgruppe*, was a driver. He witnessed and took part in many extermination actions. After he was captured in 1941 he spoke freely of his home in Brunswick, of his mother—and of his war work which often took him to Auschwitz concentration camp. There, he said: "The Russian prisoners of war had to walk about one kilometre from the station to the camp. In the camp they stayed one night without food. The next night they were led away for execution. The prisoners were being transferred from the inner camp in trucks, one of which was driven by me. . . . The execution took place in barracks which had recently been constructed for the purpose." Little can be added to Waldmann's description of the executions. "One room was reserved," he said, "for undressing and another for waiting; in one of them a radio played rather loudly. It was done purposely so that the prisoners could not guess that death awaited them. From the second room they went, one by one, through a passage, into a small fenced-in room with an iron grid let into the floor. Under the grid was a drain. As soon as a prisoner of war was killed the corpse was carried out by two German prisoners while the blood was washed off the grid.

"In this small room there was a slot in the wall, approximately fifty centimetres in length. The prisoner of war stood with the back of his head against the slot and the sniper shot at him from behind the slot. In practice this arrangement did not prove satisfactory since the sniper often missed the prisoner. After eight days a new

arrangement was made. The prisoner, as before, was placed against the wall; an iron plate was slowly lowered on to his head. The prisoner was under the impression that he was being measured for height. The iron plate contained a ramrod which shot out suddenly and pole-axed the prisoner with a blow on the back of the head. He dropped dead. The iron plate was operated by a foot lever in a corner of the room. The personnel working the room belonged to the *Sonderkommando* (*Einsatzgruppe*). . . . The bodies of prisoners thus murdered were burned in four mobile crematoria transported in trailers and attached to motor-cars. . . ."

In Lublin S.S. Brigade Leader Globocnik personally supervised the executions and reported to Himmler that he had been able to effect a large saving in the foodstuffs allocated to camps in his *Gau* (district). Eventually a total of over two million people were killed under Globocnik's aegis—many of them perishing from starvation, as effective an instrument of mass murder as the executions. Himmler patted Globocnik on the back. No flaws here, no failures, no set-backs.

Nothing in Lublin like the exasperating, futile experiments with gas vans, reports of which were put on Himmler's desk. "Oh, he could not bear technical hitches!" Wolff told me. "He was a glutton for efficiency!" he emphasized. "Are you talking about the gas vans?" I asked. "Oh no, I did not know anything about those—until after the war!" Nevertheless, Himmler's initial graced a correspondence, obviously brought to his notice, between S.S. Officer Rudolf Becker and Brigade-leader Rauff (at the time Chief of Office II of the Reich Security Main Office). Becker, an engineer, had been pondering over the problems of extermination and had come to the conclusion that much time and trouble could be saved by eliminating the need for transporting prisoners to camps and thence to places of execution. He had made an invention which he now humbly and modestly submitted to Herr Rauff. "Subject: Gas Vans," said the letter. "Gas vans," it read, "can be driven to execution spot which is generally stationed ten to fifteen kilometres from main road. . . ." While being driven to the place of execution, an ingenious device, the invention of Becker, made it possible for the gas fumes to be directed into the vans. On arrival the victims were already dead and all that remained to be done was to bury them. It was as simple as that. But it did not work. *Einsatzgruppe C* was issued with four vans, but the commandant complained that "those to be executed became frantic. . . ." After Himmler had approved the use of the vans and had allocated a number of them to each Action Group, the commandant stated: "Although they were camouflaged as cabin trailers . . . the vehicles became well known to authorities and civilian population, which called them 'death vans.'"

It was some time before Himmler was informed that the gas-van idea did not work. "The vans were loaded with the victims," expert Ohlendorf explained, "and driven to the place of burial, which was usually the same as that used for mass executions. The time needed for transportation was sufficient to ensure the death of the victims. . . . It took about ten to fifteen minutes for them to die; they were not conscious of what was happening to them. About fifteen to twenty-five persons could be killed simultaneously. . . ." Yet, Ohlendorf confessed, he was not satisfied with this arrangement and, frankly, he preferred a more military form of execution and said so in his communications to the Reichsfuehrer. "Shooting in the neck was preferable . . ." he wrote, and proceeded to give his reasons: "The aim was that the individual leaders and men should be able to carry out the executions in a military manner, acting on orders" [his own orders] "... and should not have to make a decision of their own. It was to all intents and purposes an order which they were to carry out. On the other hand, it was known that through the emotional excitement of the executions ill-treatment could not be avoided, since the victims discovered too soon that they were to be executed and could not endure the prolonged strain. . . ."

Nice man, Ohlendorf, kind-hearted and considerate! No wonder that, in 1951, six hundred thousand Germans signed a petition for his reprieve from the death sentence which was passed on him in 1947, but, owing to legal complications, had still not been carried out. Was he only anxious to do away with gas vans to save the victims emotional excitement? "There was also the fact," he said, "that the victims enclosed in the vans, under the strain and stress of their journey to death, dirtied the vans and it became an intolerable mental burden for my S.S. men to unload the corpses and to clean the vans after every trip. . . ." No, Ohlendorf's original method of execution was far more expedient. The victims, he said, were driven in trucks to the place of execution—only as many as could be executed at once. They were shot quickly and the bodies were buried in an anti-tank ditch or excavation. Leaders of firing squads, said Ohlendorf, had orders to make sure that all victims were really dead and, if necessary, to finish them off themselves. Valuables belonging to the victims had, of course, been confiscated at the time of registration or, at the latest, when they were rounded up. They were duly handed over to the Finance Ministry, either through the S.S. Main Office or directly. At first, clothing was given to the local population, but in the winter of 1941-2 . . . well, in that winter, we remember, the Wehrmacht was caught unprepared by the icy Russian climate. The clothes of the murdered Jews and Poles were used by the Wehrmacht and saved many a German soldier from death by freezing. . . .

Ohlendorf was also firmly against the practice of shooting prisoners in the neck. Why? "Because both for the victims and for those who carried out the executions it was, psychologically, an immense burden to bear," he said. Yes, it was Heinrich Himmler who had ordered that women and children should be killed in the gas vans and not, as hitherto, shot like their menfolk. But he, Ohlendorf, was able to convince the Reichsfuehrer from his own experience that he was wrong. In the Gestapo H.Q. in Berlin, in the meantime, the accent was on speed. It was through the medium of the Gestapo that the order for "final solution" had to be implemented and, to show Himmler that he was not lagging behind, Gestapo Chief Heinrich Mueller sent a communication to the Reichsfuehrer in which he said: "In connexion with the increase in the transfer . . . to concentration camps, ordered to be completed by 30 January, 1943, the following procedure should be applied in the Jewish section: Start of transportation—11 January. End of transportation — 31 January, 1943. (The Reich railways are unable to provide special trains for the evacuation during the period from 15 December, 1942, to 10 January, 1943, because of the increased traffic of Wehrmacht leave trains.) As heretofore, only such Jews will be taken for the evacuation who do not have any particular connexions. . . . Among those listed for deportation are three thousand Jews from occupied Dutch territories. . . ." Copy of the note went to Amt IV4b, where Karl Eichmann was in charge. This was the Jewish sub-section of the Gestapo.

Nothing has been heard of Eichmann since February, 1945, when he was last seen in Berlin by Dieter Wisliceny, one of his assistants. "If the war is lost I shall commit suicide," Eichmann had then said cynically, ". . . and I shall leap to my grave laughing. . . ." Wisliceny, not a man of great sensitivity, was puzzled. "Why laughing?" he asked. "Well," Eichmann replied, "because the feeling that I have five million people on my conscience will be a source of great satisfaction to me." But there is reason to believe that this man—with five million people on his conscience —was still alive in 1952, hiding somewhere in the world under an assumed name. He was his old smooth self in 1942, a tall, fair, blue-eyed dream-type of a German, as he has been described. Eichmann rarely talked about his youth, but it has since become known that he was born in Palestine of Protestant parents and became a student of theology and an expert on Jewish affairs. His parents lived in the German Templar Colony of Sarona, near Tel Aviv, and the little blond boy went to Jewish schools where he quickly outstripped his fellow pupils in the knowledge of the Talmud and, as he grew up, of Jewish history and literature. He spoke Hebrew fluently and often surprised his victims by his profound understanding of Jewish affairs. One of the Jews whom he

met on a visit to Buchenwald concentration camp was Georg Boehm, the author of an encyclopedic history of Zionism. "I know you and have read your book," he said to the astonished Jewish prisoner who stood trembling before the young man with power over life and death. "Very interesting," Eichmann mused, "very interesting!" That same morning he signed Boehm's death sentence. "The Jewish intellectuals are the most dangerous ones . . ." he said to the camp commandant.

Eichmann had come to Germany at the age of twenty in 1932 and joined Streicher's *Der Stuermer* as a reporter. When the Nazis came to power in 1933 Streicher recommended his young expert to Himmler, who was impressed by his knowledge and put him in charge of the Jewish section of the Gestapo. Jews who met him when the Gestapo was still negotiating with representative Jewish bodies—chiefly to induce them to finance the emigration of German Jews—found Eichmann scrupulously polite, sometimes even amiable, always considerate. Many fell into his trap and, thinking they were talking to a friend, confided in him, supplied him with information which he later used against them and their fellow Jews. Many German Jewish leaders were almost sad when he disappeared from his office in 1936. They could not guess that, on Himmler's orders, he had returned to Palestine to recruit the Templar colonies for Nazism, and to establish contact with the Arab leaders. He returned a few months later with a secret treaty between the Nazi Government and the Arab terrorists in his pocket, and having won over the Mufti of Jerusalem as a firm ally of Germany.

His reputation soared, Himmler decorated him and, when dealing with the Jewish question, always relied on his advice. Although Heydrich was the head of the organization and Gestapo–Mueller was nominally Eichmann's departmental chief, the young expert had the ear of the Reichsfuehrer and became the principal executor of his policy of extermination. Eichmann was clever enough to know that, should Germany lose the war, his fate would be sealed. He refused to put his name to any document dealing with the extermination of the Jews and invariably issued orders to his large staff only verbally. Smooth and refined as he was in personal conversation, a man who seemed to have little in common with the violent thugs around him, he could not disguise his deep-seated sadism when he went on tours of inspection to watch the operation of incinerators in Buchenwald and Auschwitz, or when he followed the conquering German armies into half a dozen countries to supervise the registration, collection and deportation of Jews. When, in 1941, extermination became official Reich policy, he decided to get experience of the problem at its roots. Eventually he left his mark on Warsaw, Oslo, Brussels, Athens, Belgrade,

Amsterdam and Vichy. Personally he took charge of a deportation transport from Moravska-Ostrava in Czechoslovakia. Having observed the Jews on their way to death, he installed himself for a few months as commandant of Auschwitz camp to observe from close quarters the final act of extermination.

Dieter Wisliceny has given information which showed Eichmann at work, tirelessly gathering in the Jews from the occupied countries. In the spring of 1942 he negotiated the transfer of seventeen thousand Jews from Slovakia to Poland. Blandly he assured Slovakia's Premier Tuka that they were needed as workers for the German war economy. Though a faithful Quisling in most respects, Tuka, a priest, seemed anxious to alleviate the fate of the Slovakian deportees. Could not their families be taken with them, he asked Eichmann. During a visit to Tuka, Eichmann told the Slovak Premier that the Jews would be treated decently. All right, if he wanted their families to go as well—he, Eichmann, would gladly agree. Tuka, however, became apprehensive about the fate of the Slovakian Jews. In several letters he asked Eichmann to permit a Slovak delegation to visit them at the "place of work" in Poland. Eichmann was polite, as usual, but evasive. In telephone conversations with Slovakian ministers he pooh-poohed rumours that "all Jews in Poland were to be exterminated." The Slovakian Jews would be treated most humanely, he promised again. Wisliceny reported that he, too, interceded with Eichmann to allow a Slovak delegation to visit Poland. "This request cannot be granted under any circumstances!" Eichmann replied. "Anyway, most of these Jews are no longer alive!"

Wisliceny is one of the few people who admitted having seen Himmler's order for the extermination of the Jews. Eichmann, he said, had shown it to him in his office. From his safe he had taken an order marked "Secret" and addressed to the Chief of the Security Police and Security Service and to S.S. Brigadefuehrer Gluecks, the Inspector of Concentration Camps. It was signed by Himmler. "I was shocked," Wisliceny recalled; "God grant that our enemies never have the opportunity of doing the same to the German people," he said to Eichmann. "Don't be a sentimental fool—this is an order of the Fuehrer and must be carried out." The Fuehrer's orders, however, invariably bore Himmler's signature and went from Himmler to Mueller, who passed them on to Eichmann. Eichmann, in turn, instructed the commanders of the concentration camps, either through the office of Inspector Gluecks or directly over the telephone. But he also saw to it that the influx of victims into the concentration camps—extermination camps by now—should not slacken. Wisliceny explained that Eichmann had representatives in all occupied countries and described how, for instance, S.S. Sturmbannfuehrer Rolf Guenther was attached to the

German military authorities in Salonika, Greece, but that, as in many instances when a major Eichmann-action was contemplated, special envoys were sent to assist his local expert. In Macedonia, Wisliceny said, there were some fifty thousand Jews of Spanish descent whom Eichmann ordered to be concentrated in special quarters in Salonika. Early in 1943 a teletype message from Eichmann ordered these Jews to be sent to Auschwitz. Transport was requisitioned from the Wehrmacht and twenty-five trains, closed freight cars, took the Greek Jews to their death in Poland.

As in other similar cases—and the procedure was repeated in all occupied countries—the order for deportation was preceded by a request to the Jewish community to provide funds for the maintenance of the deportees. Two hundred and eighty million drachmas were contributed in Greece. They were promptly credited to the German Military Administration — a generous gift from Heinrich Himmler. Burnt to ashes in the incinerators of Auschwitz, the hapless Jews did not need any money to maintain themselves. The story of Eichmann continues with a deadly monotony. After Greece it was Ruthenia—and two hundred thousand Jews; after Ruthenia, Hungary—and here Eichmann put in another stint, this time as chief of the "Special Action Eichmann," an off-shoot of the *Einsatzgruppen*. There were four hundred and fifty thousand Jews to be dealt with in Hungary. From Bulgaria eight thousand Jews were brought to Auschwitz; from Croatia Wisliceny said he knew of "only" three thousand Jews who had been deported from Agram. . . .

Eichmann reported to Himmler, who showed great interest in every phase of the programme. Together with Eichmann he went on a tour of the concentration camps to deal with the details of the "final solution," and in the intervals negotiated with representatives of industry, and with members of Hermann Goering's economic Four-Year-Plan organization to co-ordinate requirements for Jewish labour with his plan for quick extermination. Already cities like Vienna and Munich had been declared *judenrein* (literally: clean of Jews), but the transports to his camps included many strong young fellows who, industrial representatives maintained, could serve German interest better by working in the armaments industry than by disappearing into the furnaces of Dachau, Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Treblinka or Bergen-Belsen. In these camps novel methods of mass killings had been developed. Death by steam and gas alternated with *Aktion Kugel*, an ingenious device by which inmates submitting themselves to tests and measurings were killed by automatics installed in the measuring apparatus. After many weeks of negotiations German industrialists prevailed on Himmler to slow down the mass murder and allow, at least, the

fittest Jews and Russians to continue working on weapons with which to capture and kill their own allies.

It was a severe set-back for Himmler; the date of his defeat was 27 April, 1943. For almost two years the incinerators had been working and devouring precious fuel together with the corpses of his victims. Trains filled with new prisoners were coming in, in strict rotation with loads of coke, which was, in any case, getting shorter and threatened to slow down the work in the concentration camps. Camp commanders clamoured for more coke, or else the congestion would get worse; already the death-rate from starvation was causing an "unhealthy accumulation" of bodies. In many huts and barracks the living slept side by side with the dead and the danger of epidemics put the fear of God into the guards who came into contact with their prisoners. On 27 April, at long last, there was a decision, but it was not what the camp commandants had expected. On that day they received a letter signed: "Gluecks, S.S. Brigadefuehrer and Major-General," which stated crisply: "The Reichsfuehrer S.S. and Chief of the German Police has decided, after consultation, that in future only mentally sick prisoners may be selected for *Aktion 14 F 13* by the medical commissions appointed. . . . All other prisoners . . . are to be basically excepted from this action. Bedridden prisoners are to be drafted for suitable work which they can perform in bed. THEREFORE REQUESTS FOR FUEL FOR THIS PURPOSE ARE UNNECESSARY."

By that time Himmler's victims could already be numbered in millions. The most reliable post-war estimate puts the number of Jews alone who have perished in massacres and concentration camps as a direct result of S.S. activity at six million. "Impossible," Wolff commented when I mentioned the figure. "Although"—and this is a version to which all surviving S.S. officers cling with understandable tenacity—"although at the utmost sixty or seventy people knew what was going on and were immediately concerned with the *Vorgaenge* (happenings), as S.S. leaders we discussed the matter in captivity after the war. Pooling our knowledge and available information on gas-chambers, and other technical details, we came to the conclusion that the figure is exaggerated. I should put it at two million at the outside. . . ." Goering, in Nuremberg, also worked out that *only* one or two million Jews can possibly have been killed. To this day ex-Nazis argue about the figures—in millions. It never occurs to them to consider the fate of a single individual or his family.

For Himmler, even after manpower shortage and fuel economy forced him to restrict the rate of extermination, there was still hope. He had carefully excluded the "mentally sick," as well as the so-called "anti-socials" from this reprieve. As far as they were concerned he stood firm by an agreement between his office and the

Reich Minister of Justice Thierack. Dated 18 September, 1942, it stipulated that: "Anti-social elements are to be transferred from prison to the Reichsfuehrer S.S. for extermination through work. To be transferred without exception are persons under protective arrest. . . ." There is no need, then, to dwell on the conditions under which those under "protective" custody were forced to work. Enough of them died to keep the wheels of the electrical appliances working which had just been installed in Camp Belsen, near Celle, even though the infamous "bathhouse" at Auschwitz, where prisoners had been killed when they believed that they were going to have a bath, was idle for a while.

The rate of mass murder slowed down, but the psychological conditions under which the prisoners lived did not improve. Fear remained, malnutrition continued to reap a rich harvest for death. The moral deterioration of all except the most strong-minded prisoners went apace. Curiously, and in a strange alliance, Catholics and Communists proved the most resilient. It is one of Himmler's greatest crimes that his treatment of concentration-camp inmates turned many fundamentally decent men and women into veritable beasts. To augment their rations, they would steal, rob and, if necessary, murder. The real criminals among them, deliberately chosen by the S.S. guards as block leaders—*Kapos*—often outdid the guards in cruelty. To hasten the process of moral disintegration, brothels were installed in the camps and soon S.S. men picked themselves the best-looking girls as their permanent mistresses. The girls, in turn, pre-war prostitutes, used the privileged position they thus gained to terrorize their fellow prisoners and some S.S. men alike.

On the other side of the fence, too, when women—S.S. women—were introduced into these infernos, they proved themselves almost invariably worse even than the men. In Belsen, Camp Guard Irma Greese used to put on gloves before belabouring prisoners with her fists, never went into the compound without a whip and deliberately set bloodhounds on inmates. In Buchenwald, Frau Ilse Koch, wife of the commandant, who—but for Himmler—might have spent her days quietly in the obscurity of a German provincial town, revealed herself as a perverted beast. It was Ilse Koch's idea to select prisoners with "interesting" tattoo marks for extermination and to preserve their skins, some of which she had turned into lampshades. Orders had been issued that no prisoner should raise his eyes or as much as look at her when she passed them. Deliberately, her breasts bared, Ilse Koch walked challengingly among men who were as starved of women as they were of food, and mercilessly, joyfully whipped those who could not resist casting a glance in her direction.

From the camps perversion and sadism spread to the higher

strata of S.S. officers. Men like Gluecks, Inspector of Concentration Camps, and S.S. General Oswald Pohl, who controlled their administration, were eventually so intoxicated with power that their own S.S. staff found them insufferable. Fear and hate surrounded them in their offices, and other S.S. leaders avoided their company. Some extermination experts, like Otto Ohlendorf, receded into a state of moral indifference. While they were held in prison after the war—until their execution in 1951—American psychologists diagnosed a complete atrophy of normal feelings, probably a cultivated defence against any psychological reaction which would otherwise have upset their mental balance.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THANATOLOGY—THE SCIENCE OF KILLING

FOR many years past Heinrich Himmler had allowed himself little time to visit his family and, even during his short sojourns at Lindenfycht, he remained aloof and unapproachable. On one such occasion, in the summer of 1940, when he came to stay by the side of the Tegernsee for a few days, his elder brother, S.S. Colonel Gebhard Himmler, drove over from his own villa in Gmünd to show the Reichsfuehrer his new car. Cars, Gebhard knew, always interested his brother. Unannounced, he entered Heinrich's study to be treated at once to a sharp lesson in etiquette. "You must not come to see me without making an appointment," Heinrich Himmler insisted. "What if I were in conference with a Cabinet Minister . . . ? I will not have it said that, at a time when thousands of people want to talk to me, I am granting special privileges to my family. I am the Reichsfuehrer and you are only a Colonel . . . !" Sadly Gebhard left without a word. Heinrich Himmler was more relaxed when he went to Munich to see his mother. Frau Anna Himmler was ailing and her son had granted her request to let her own doctor, Rudolf Fahrenkamp, remain in attendance. "Fahrenkamp was the only non-Aryan ever to come into personal contact with Himmler," an S.S. *aide* told me in 1950, still obviously unable to disguise his pained surprise at his late Reichsfuehrer's lapse. Fahrenkamp had Jewish blood in his veins; one of his grandmothers had been Jewish and Himmler knew it.

"Heinrich Himmler had no personal prejudices . . ." said his brother after the war. "On the contrary. When Mother insisted that Fahrenkamp should always be near her, Heinrich provided facilities for him to carry on research in the Dachau laboratories, so that he should never be far away." In Dachau Fahrenkamp studied the growth and behaviour of the rare plants and herbs which prisoners had planted out in the extensive gardens in the neighbourhood of the concentration camp. On Himmler's instructions Fahrenkamp concentrated on experiments with homoeopathic emanation, from which he expected an increase in the rate of productivity of flowers, vegetables and, eventually, of all agricultural produce. Whenever Himmler visited his mother he would listen for hours to Fahrenkamp's reports and, eventually, even suggested that he should have

the help of a large staff of S.S. botanists to widen the range of his experiments from the Dachau gardens to extensive field tests. Big amounts of money were made available to Fahrenkamp from the S.S. Main Office (which, at the time, also financed another scientist, Dr. von Luetzelburg, who had worked for years among the Indians of Brazil and had promised Himmler to "liberate" the German people from the tyranny of *chemie*). Himmler demanded that Fahrenkamp develop means—whatever the cost—by which all agricultural pests could be done away with; the idea appealed to the Reichsfuehrer almost as much as his battle against the "human pests," which he was waging so successfully. The result of this work, he was convinced, would be an era of abundance. Heinrich Himmler, if he could not conquer the earth, might at least be hailed as the conqueror of the soil.

His mother's health in the meantime deteriorated. Early in 1941 Himmler was called back to Munich and arrived just in time to take his final leave and to hear her whisper her last wish into his ear—that, like her late husband, she might be buried as a Christian, as the good Catholic she had been all her life. Heinrich Himmler promised to grant her request. In near-by Dachau hundreds of Bavarian Catholic priests were held under humiliating conditions, sneered at, insulted and tortured by Himmler's S.S. guards. In his Archbishop's Palace the aged, venerated Cardinal Faulhaber was virtually kept a prisoner. Notwithstanding these facts, after attending a service in Munich's Frauenkirche, Heinrich Himmler followed the procession of his mother's funeral to the Catholic cemetery and stood, his head bowed, while a Catholic priest delivered a last sermon. "We are here to bid farewell to a kind and pious lady, Frau Anna Himmler," he said. "But there are others . . ." and with an unmistakable glance in Himmler's direction, ". . . there are others who do not believe in God!" Dead silence fell on the mourners and they did not dare to look up or else they would have seen the mighty Reichsfuehrer S.S. biting his lips, blood leaving his cheeks until, white as a sheet, he swayed as if he would collapse. Like hammer-blows the priest's last words hit him. "And those," he continued, emphasizing every word, "who do not believe in God will one day regret it!"

Never before, since he had become Reichsfuehrer S.S. and Chief of the German Police, had any German dared to challenge Himmler with such hints. What would Himmler do? Anxious eyes began to look in his direction. His *aides* were on tenterhooks. But Himmler silently turned and slowly walked away. "Determined opposition, any display of personal courage, always left him limp and dispirited," one of his friends said. "He had no spontaneous reply to such defiance. On the few rare occasions when he encountered it he withdrew to plan his revenge." In this instance, however, he

seemed to have accepted the public affront. "He was sentimental," said his friend, "where his parents or their memory was concerned; he did not react as he might have done under other circumstances." In this spirit he remained faithful to his mother's friends. He did not, as his entourage had expected, discard "that quarter-Jew Fahrenkamp." And he formed a close friendship with another Luftwaffe doctor and peace-time S.S. man, whom he had met through Fahrenkamp, Captain S.S. Untersturmfuehrer Dr. Sigmund Rascher, a small, agile doctor who had cunningly succeeded in making Himmler rise to his conversational baits by telling him of his great interest in scientific medical research and experiments. The "quack" in Himmler was always alive.

Although he would not even admit it to himself, Himmler felt that he and Rascher had something else in common, too. Like himself, Rascher had an illegitimate child and "his fiancée" was expecting another one. But a few indeterminable branches in her family tree had made it so far impossible for him to marry. Rascher had told the Reichsfuehrer of his troubles, and Himmler, always eager to play patron to young, loving couples, had promised to clear his path to a happy marriage. Rascher was not slow to take advantage of the protection of so important a person as Heinrich Himmler. The relationship between the two men would have been difficult to explain had not Rascher cunningly adjusted his whole life so as to foster and cement and use it for his own purposes. There is still in existence an extraordinary document to illustrate this relationship, a letter from Rascher to Himmler in which Rascher ingeniously mixes personal and professional problems, both admirably illustrating Himmler's preoccupations—birth and death. The letter has been preserved as a piece of evidence because it represents the first move towards a series of crimes which surely constitute a new low level in the activities of Himmler and his S.S. gang.

"Hochverehrter Reichsfuehrer" (highly esteemed Reichsfuehrer), wrote Rascher from the Trogerstrasse in Munich on 15 May, 1941. "My most sincere thanks for your cordial wishes and flowers on the birth of my second son. This time, too, it is a strong boy, though he arrived three weeks too early. I shall take the liberty to send you a small picture of both children some time. Since I want a third child very soon, I feel very grateful to you that, with your help, the wedding is made possible. . . . Today I was informed . . . that one hundred and sixty-five marks, as required for a wedding, will be charged to the account 'R' (Reichsfuehrer) and will be transmitted to the *Ahnenerbe*. I thank you heartily. I now only need a short certificate concerning Aryan descent. . . . I also thank you very cordially for the generous regular allowance of fruit; this is at present extremely important to mother and children. . . .

"For the time being I have been assigned to the *Luftgau Kom-*

mando VII Munich for a medical selection course. During this course, where research on high-altitude flying plays a prominent part, determined by the somewhat higher ceiling of the English fighter-planes, considerable regret was expressed that no experiments on human beings have so far been possible for us because such experiments are very dangerous and nobody is volunteering. I, therefore, put the serious question: is there any possibility that two or three professional criminals can be made available for these experiments? . . . The experiments, in which the experimental subject, of course, may die, would take place with my collaboration. They are absolutely essential for the research on high-altitude flying . . . and cannot be carried out on monkeys. The Luftwaffe physician . . . is also of the opinion that the problems in question can only be solved by experiments on human beings. . . .

"With my most hearty wishes, I am with

"Heil Hitler!

"Yours gratefully devoted,

"(*Signed*) S. Rascher."

How useful it was to be a personal friend of the Reichsfuehrer S.S. Among humble Luftwaffe doctors one's prestige was bound to soar if it was possible to enlist the help of the almighty Heinrich Himmler for the greater glory of the experimental station. "Heinrich Himmler has often talked to me about the criminals in concentration camps," Rascher boasted. "There is no doubt that he will let us have a few. . . ." Rascher was right. Only ten days went by before an answer arrived at the Trogerstrasse. Addressed to Dr. Rascher, it was written by S.S. Sturmbannfuehrer Dr. Rudolf Brandt, Himmler's medical expert. Himmler had carefully read Rascher's letter and had ordered Brandt to deal with it. Brandt reflected his chief's pleasure at granting Dr. Rascher's request. "Dear Dr. Rascher," he wrote. "Shortly before flying to Oslo, the Reichsfuehrer S.S. gave me your letter of 15 May, 1941. . . . I can inform you that prisoners will, of course, be gladly made available for the high-flight researches. I have informed the Chief of the Security Police of this agreement of the Reichsfuehrer S.S. and requested that the competent official be instructed to get in touch with you. . . ."

It was as simple as that: ". . . the experimental subject *of course* may die . . . ," wrote Rascher; ". . . prisoners will *of course* be gladly made available . . ." was the reply. Rascher had modestly asked for "two or three" professional criminals. "How many concentration-camp inmates were subjected to these high-altitude experiments?" the prosecutor asked a witness when Dr. Rascher's colleagues were brought to trial after the war. "There were one hundred and eighty to two hundred inmates who were subjected to the experiments . . . seventy or eighty were killed

during the experiments. . . ." Soon the experiments were extended and the small Luftwaffe research station was too small to accommodate the apparatus and the galaxy of medical authorities, orderlies and assistants dealing with them. At Himmler's suggestion all the paraphernalia of Dr. Rascher's research work was transferred to Dachau concentration camp, since here was a never-ending source of "experimental subjects." Rascher, at the same time, began to engineer his transfer to the *Waffen* S.S., so as to escape the inquiring minds of Luftwaffe and Army doctors and to place himself beyond the authority of the Reich medical authorities.

The Reich Chief Manager of the *Ahnenerbe* was instructed to give Rascher every assistance required and orders from Himmler's office removed all obstacles, waved aside whatever doubts and protests were raised. Rascher, a comparatively junior officer, a young man with little scientific experience, was given power over life and death of the inmates of Dachau concentration camp, along rows of whom he moved with a critical eye to pick out those most suitable for his experiments. The unfortunates were taken to the S.S. hospital wing, enjoyed a week of special diet until their physical condition resembled that of a serving Luftwaffe pilot. Then Dr. Rascher submitted them to his experiments. It was not long before he could proudly dispatch an "interim report" to Heinrich Himmler personally.

"Highly esteemed Reichsfuehrer," he wrote. "Enclosed is an interim report on the low-pressure experiments so far conducted in the concentration camp of Dachau. . . . I believe that you will be greatly interested. . . . Is it not possible that on the occasion of a trip to southern Germany you have some of the experiments demonstrated to you? . . ." Himmler was delighted. He did not allow much time to pass before he visited Dachau to inspect Dr. Rascher's work for himself. Flying south, he studied the report of his favourite doctor. "One of the experiments," it said, "took such an extraordinary course that I called the S.S. physician of the camp as witness, since I had worked on these experiments all by myself. . . ." Soon Himmler was to see the experiment. This is how Rascher described it: "It was a continuous experiment (simulating the conditions of a parachute descent) without oxygen at a height of ten miles conducted on a thirty-seven-year-old Jew in good general condition. Breathing continued up to thirty minutes. After four minutes the VP (*Versuchs Person*—Experimental Subject) began to perspire and to wriggle his head; after five minutes, cramps occurred; between six and ten minutes, breathing increased in speed and the VP became unconscious; from eleven to thirty minutes, breathing slowed down to three breaths per minute, finally stopping altogether. Severest cyanosis developed . . . and foam appeared at the mouth. At five-minute intervals electro-cardiograms . . . were

written. After breathing had stopped the electro-cardiogram was continuously written until the action of the heart had come to a complete standstill. About half an hour after breathing had stopped, dissection was started. . . ."

There were, of course, details about the result of the autopsy; but Rascher had as yet not informed his Reichsfuehrer that, in some instances and in his anxiety to see what went on inside the head of his VP, he had given orders that the head of the living human guinea-pig be split open. For the time being, after Himmler had watched the gruesome performance, Rascher contented himself with saying that "the experiments will be continued and extended." Brandt wrote to say how interested the Reichsfuehrer was and Himmler took an early opportunity of writing to thank Rascher personally. He had one request: "I would like Dr. Fahrenkamp to be taken into consultation on these experiments." Himmler still pretended to himself that only persons condemned to death were used by Dr. Rascher. And here, he thought, was an occasion to show his mercy. "Considering the long-continued action of the heart, the experiments should be specifically exploited in such a manner as to determine whether these men could be recalled to life. Should such an experiment succeed, then, of course, the person condemned to death shall be pardoned to concentration camp for life. . . .

"Kind regards, Heil Hitler, Yours (*signed*), H. Himmler."

Rascher was naturally puzzled and at once wrote to Dr. Brandt. "Please clarify," he pleaded. ". . . As up to now only Poles and Russians were available, some of whom had been condemned to death, it is not quite clear to me . . . whether they may be pardoned to concentration camp for life after having lived through several very severe experiments. . . ." What a ridiculous notion! By return of post Dr. Rascher was informed that "the instruction given some time ago by the Reichsfuehrer S.S. concerning amnesty of test persons does not apply to Poles and Russians . . . (*signed*) Brandt." Rascher could not resist writing reports to Himmler; almost every report ended with a new request. "May I take pictures of the various dissection preparations to make a record of the strange formations of air embolism? Highly esteemed Reichsfuehrer . . . your active interest in these experiments has a tremendous influence on one's working capacity and initiative. . . ."

Rascher worked as hard on the experiments as he laboured to exclude other doctors from them. Letter after letter to Himmler complained of interference. So anxious was he to remain alone in this unique field of research that he even defied one of Himmler's closest friends, Professor Gebhardt, S.S. Doctor-in-chief with the rank of Obergruppenfuehrer, at whose clinic in Hohenlychen Himmler often recuperated after his bouts of headaches and

stomach cramps. Gebhardt ordered Rascher to visit him. "Your reports are completely unscientific," he told Rascher coldly, and Rascher was taken aback to realize that Himmler had passed them on to the professor. "If a second-term student dared to submit a treatise of that kind," Gebhardt continued, "I would throw him out!" This is exactly what Gebhardt did to Rascher, who, in a letter to the *Ahnenerbe* Chief Sievers, bitterly complained about this treatment. At last Luftwaffe doctors, when they obtained an opportunity of studying Rascher's reports, came to the same conclusion—that they proved absolutely nothing. It was not easy to convey this to Himmler, whose enthusiasm was great. Diplomatically, Luftwaffe Field-Marshal Erhard Milch wrote to Karl Wolff. "Dear Wolffy," Milch said in his letter, dated 20 May, 1942. "Our medical inspector reports to me that any continuation of these experiments seems essentially unreasonable. . . ." Perhaps, he suggested, some other experiments could be carried out; and, anyway, the Luftwaffe needed the low-pressure chamber, undoubtedly—though Milch did not say so—for more qualified doctors to make more reliable and less fatal experiments. How about experiments in regard to perils at high sea . . . ?

Rascher did not need much encouragement to transfer his attention to freezing experiments. So many Luftwaffe pilots were shot down into the ice-cold sea that here was clearly a wide field for interesting tests. Walter Neff, a medical orderly, later described one of these experiments at which, reluctantly, Rascher had accepted assistance from two doctors—Professor Holzloehner and Dr. Finke. Holzloehner and Finke soon gave up, but Rascher continued on his own. He had, he said, to give a lecture on the subject at Marburg University. Basins were filled with water and ice was added until the temperature measured three degrees of Celsius; the experimental subjects, dressed in flying-suits or naked, were then placed in the ice water. While Holzloehner and Finke were active, most experiments were conducted under narcotics and no experimental subject was actually killed in the water. However, it was different when Rascher took over and carried on alone. At that time a large number of persons, according to an eye-witness, were kept in the water until they were dead.

Walter Neff described the "worst experiment which was ever carried out." According to him, "two Russian officers were carried out of the bunker. We were forbidden to speak to them," Neff said. "They arrived at approximately four o'clock in the afternoon. Rascher had them undressed and they went into the water naked. Hour after hour passed, and while usually after a short time, sixty minutes, freezing set in, these two Russians were still conscious after two hours. All our appeals to Rascher asking him to give them an injection were of no avail. Approximately during the third

hour one Russian said to the other: 'Comrade, tell that officer to shoot us.' The other replied: 'Don't expect any mercy from this Fascist dog.' Then they shook hands and said: 'Goodbye, Comrade.' After these words were translated for Rascher by a young Pole, Rascher went back to the office and the Pole tried at once to give them an anaesthetic with chloroform. But Rascher returned immediately and threatened to shoot us if we dared approach these victims again. The experiment lasted at least five hours until death occurred. Both corpses were sent to Munich for autopsy. . . ."

One important aspect of the so-called freezing experiments was to find out by what means it would be possible to revive victims who had been subjected to freezing for some time. Dr. Finke used hot-water baths, but after his departure Rascher had a novel idea. Surely, he argued, the warmth of a human body should do the trick. Off went one of his usual letters to Himmler personally asking for the "use of" a few women from Ravensbrueck concentration camp. Ten women were ordered to report to Dachau, young, strong women, all prostitutes, who were held in the women's camp. In Dachau they were ordered to press themselves against the body of the frozen person in order to revive him in that manner. The result of the experiment was highly satisfactory to Rascher until Himmler was told that "German women"—prostitutes, mark you—were forced by Rascher into physical contact with Jews, Poles and Russians. Himmler soon stopped that. He did not mind the "experimental subjects" dying. But German women touching them—never!

High-altitude and freezing experiments were only the beginning of Himmler's attempt to prove himself a saviour of (German) mankind, a healer and patron of science, the organizer of experiments such as the whole medical profession had hitherto been unable to carry out for the benefit of the Wehrmacht and the German people as a whole. The "Doctor's Trial" in Nuremberg produced horrible evidence of the length to which Himmler's scientists went to gratify their chief's "humanitarian" ambitions. Rascher was not there to defend himself—he did not escape the many S.S. enemies which he had made in his mad scramble for success. But Professors Karl Gebhardt and Joachim Mrugowsky, two leading S.S. doctors, the two Brandts (not related: one Rudolf, Himmler's secretary, the other Karl, eventually Reich Chief Doctor) joined many eminent scientists in the dock. They had finally succumbed to the temptation and participated in the experiments which soon covered a much wider range. One woman, Herta Oberhauser, doctor at Ravensbrueck women's concentration camp, joined twenty-two men in the dock. An abridged version of the proceedings covers a thousand printed pages.

"The defendants in this case," said the U.S. Brigadier-General Telford Taylor, Chief Prosecutor, in a speech which is a forensic masterpiece, restrained and incisive at the same time, "are charged with murders, tortures and other atrocities committed in the name of science. The victims of these crimes number hundreds of thousands. . . . These defendants did not kill in hot blood . . . some of them may be sadists who killed and tortured for sport, but they are not all perverts, they are not ignorant men. Most of them are trained physicians. . . . It is incumbent on us," Taylor said, "to set forth the . . . motives which moved these defendants to treat their fellow men as less than beasts. . . . This case . . . offers a signal opportunity to lay before the German people the true cause (of their defeat). . . . The insane and malignant doctrines . . . account alike for the crimes of these defendants and for the terrible fate of Germany. . . . A nation which deliberately infects itself with poison will inevitably sicken and die. These defendants and others turned Germany into an infernal combination of a lunatic asylum and a charnel house. . . ."

When the American prosecutors studied the documents on which to base their prosecution, it appeared that there was no word as yet for the science which had been practised at the instigation of Heinrich Himmler to denominate the method by which prisoners and subjugated people could be killed most rapidly and in the largest possible numbers. They had to call in a lexicographer, who christened Heinrich Himmler's macabre science "Thanatology"—the science of producing death. High-altitude and freezing experiments were only side-lines, the personal hobbies of Dr. Rascher. Their appetite whetted, and assured of Himmler's support, stimulated by his active interest, many of his so-called medical experts proceeded to study a method by which the S.S. war aim of decimating the eastern population could be quickly and—as important—cheaply accomplished.

Himmler had great faith in the revelations of his South American expert and was delighted that he claimed to have extracted a drug from a plant which, if taken orally or by injection, would bring about sterilization. From a Dr. Adolf Pokorny Himmler received a long letter in which Pokorny explained that the drug, caladium seguinum, if it were possible to extract it, would produce an imperceptible sterilization in human beings. "The thought alone," Dr. Pokorny wrote, "that the three million Bolsheviks who are at present German prisoners could be sterilized so that they could be used as labourers, but be prevented from reproduction, opens the most far-reaching perspective." Himmler did not need much persuasion to take up this propitious suggestion. He gave orders that experiments to test the Pokorny Plan were to be conducted at Auschwitz concentration camp. The results of the tests were dis-

appointing, but new suggestions were coming in hard and fast when it became known that the Reichsfuehrer was taking a personal interest in the matter. Another doctor—Dr. Karl Clauberg—developed a method of sterilizing women. It worked better than the Pokorny Plan and was applied to several thousand Jewesses and gipsies at Ravensbrueck concentration camp.

Professor Gebhardt, jealous of Dr. Rascher's opportunities, soon took himself to Ravensbrueck to conduct sterilization by surgical operation, but that again was a slow and unpromising procedure. He discussed the matter with Himmler, who acquainted him with an idea which Dr. Viktor Brack had submitted to him according to which sterilization could be accomplished by means of powerful X-rays and that castration would then result. He explained that the danger of this X-ray method lay in the fact that other parts of the body, if they were not protected with lead, would also be seriously affected. In order to prevent the victims from realizing what was happening to them, Dr. Brack made a suggestion to Himmler. "One way," he explained, "to carry out these experiments would be to have these people lined up before a counter. They would be given a form to be filled out, the whole process taking two or three minutes. The official attendant behind the counter can operate the apparatus and the switch which will start the rays coming from both sides. With such an installation a hundred and fifty to two hundred persons could be sterilized daily, while twenty installations would take care of three thousand to four thousand persons daily." Brack was careful to take into consideration other contingencies. "Among ten million Jews in Europe," he informed Himmler, "there are, I figure, at least two to three million men and women who are fit enough to work. Considering the extraordinary difficulties the labour problem presents us with, I hold the view that these two or three millions should be specially selected and preserved. This can, however, only be done if at the same time they are rendered incapable of propagating. . . . Sterilization, as normally performed on persons with hereditary diseases . . . takes too long and is too expensive. Castration by X-rays, however, is not only relatively cheap but can also be performed on many thousands in the shortest time." Here was a man after Himmler's heart.

After the war medical scientists of many countries discussed at length whether their professional ethics would allow them to make use of the results of the experiments carried out on Himmler's orders, and at a terrible expense in human lives, on innocent and unwilling "experimental subjects" from Nazi concentration camps. Since the victims were forced to lay down their lives and could not be revived there should be no reason, some said, why humanity should not benefit from their sacrifice. Others shrank from employing methods developed under such circumstances. It was a

delicate controversy, but those who opposed the use of any such research results were saved a conflict of conscience. The value of the research work done by Rascher, Gebhardt and Co. was virtually nil.

About the same time, when Rascher was freezing Russians to death, camp inmates of Buchenwald and Natzweiler were called upon to submit themselves to tests to determine the value of various vaccines—typhus, yellow fever, smallpox, cholera and diphtheria among them. Himmler put a hundred concentration-camp prisoners at the disposal of the Luftwaffe medical service, on behalf of which Professor Dr. Eugen Haagen carried out the experiments. Hundreds more were later supplied. "Do you mean to say," a witness was asked at Nuremberg, "that persons were deliberately infected with typhus, just to have the viruses alive and available in blood?" "Yes, just for that particular purpose," was the reply. Block 46 at Buchenwald became the scene of these experiments. "A dreadful horror," a witness said, "seized anyone who was brought into any kind of connexion with this block. If people were selected and taken to Block 46 . . . they knew that the affair was a fatal one. A prisoner foreman, Arthur Dietzsch, exercised iron discipline, the cat-o'-nine tails really ruled supreme. Everyone who went to Block 46 not only had to expect death, a very long drawn-out and frightful death, but also torture. . . . The experimental persons waited for the day or for the night when something would be done to them; they did not know what it would be, but they guessed that it would be some frightful form of death. If they were vaccinated . . . the most horrible scenes took place because the patients were afraid that the injections were lethal. Dietzsch had to restore order with iron discipline. . . ." With blows to the slaughter bank!

Was it still "in the name of science," or was it just for fun, for "sport," as the S.S. called it, that some of the doctors in Buchenwald studied other methods on how best to kill? Brigadier-General Taylor explained that in Buchenwald poisons were administered to Russian prisoners of war in their food and the doctors stood behind a curtain to watch their reaction. Some of the Russians died immediately and those who survived were killed in order to permit autopsies. Dr. Mrugowsky wrote to Himmler to tell him about another experiment in which the victims were shot with poisoned bullets. "The projectiles in question," his letter stated, "were of a 7·65-mm. calibre, filled with crystallized poison. The experimental subjects, in a line position, were each shot in the upper part of the left thigh. The thighs of two men (out of five) were cleanly shot through. Afterwards no effect of the poison was to be observed. These two experimental subjects were, therefore, exempted. . . ." But the others, according to Mrugowsky's description, died a horrible death. After ninety minutes they started breathing heavily

until the heavy breathing changed into a flat, accelerated respiration, accompanied by extreme nausea. "Death occurred 121, 123 and 129 minutes after entry of the projectile."

There were scores of other experiments involving equally inhuman tortures. The bodies of the experimental persons mounted up until it was impossible to deal with all of them. For some time the chief manager of the *Ahnenerbe* had his eye on the corpses and his agents searched the mortuaries for suitable specimens—in vain. They could not find what he wanted. Himmler would help, he was sure, and forthwith he dispatched a letter to Himmler. If it were not available in black and white, it would be difficult to believe that the S.S. philosophy could be carried to such practical lengths. Writes S.S. Standartenfuehrer Wolfram Sievers: "We have a nearly complete collection of skulls of all races and peoples at our disposal. Only very few specimens of skulls of the Jewish race, however, are available, with the result that it is impossible to arrive at precise conclusions from examining them. The war in the east now presents us with the opportunity to overcome this deficiency. By procuring the skulls of the Jewish-Bolshevik Commissars, who represent the prototype of the repulsive, but characteristic, subhuman, we have the chance now to obtain a palpable, scientific document.

"The best, practical method for obtaining and collecting this skull material could be handled by directing the Wehrmacht to turn over alive all captured Jewish-Bolshevik Commissars to the Field Police. They, in turn, are to be given special directives to inform a certain office at regular intervals of the number and place of detention of these captured Jews and to give them special close attention and care until a special delegate arrives. This special delegate, who will be in charge of securing the 'material,' has the job of taking a series of previously established photographs, anthropological measurements, and, in addition, has to determine, as far as possible, the background, date of birth and other personal data of the prisoner. *Following the subsequently induced death of the Jew, whose head should not be damaged,* the delegate will separate the head from the body and will forward it to its proper point of destination in a hermetically sealed tin can, especially produced for the purpose and filled with a conserving fluid.

"Having arrived at the laboratory, the comparison tests and anatomical research on the skull, as well as determination of the race membership of pathological features of the skull form, the form and size of the brain, etc., can proceed. The basis of these studies will be the photos, measurements and other data supplied on the head, and, finally, the tests of the skull itself."

The situation at the Russian front was no longer such that Bolshevik Commissars could be captured at will by the Wehrmacht,

which, in spite of Dr. Rascher's freezing researches, had frozen to death by the thousand. Himmler looked favourably on Sievers' suggestion and granted his request with the proviso that he should pick his specimens from among the inmates of Auschwitz concentration camp rather than from the front. Sievers finally reported that "altogether one hundred and fifteen persons had been worked on, seventy-nine Jews, thirty Jewesses, two Poles and four Asiatics." The bodies were taken to Strasbourg University. By 1943 it must have dawned on Sievers that the day might come when he would have to answer for his "experiments." Anxiously he wrote to the S.S. Main Office for instructions about what should be done with the corpses in case of emergency. One year later the "emergency" arrived in the form of the allied armies on their march to liberate Europe and civilization from Himmler and his monsters.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE END OF HEYDRICH

THE S.S. leaders at large—by 1952 their number was again legion—had long put all unpleasant subjects behind them. "Grave tactical error!" one of them said disdainfully. "Orders from the Fuehrer. . . ," said another. "What else could Himmler do?" "Oh, only a small clique was responsible for all that," I heard from another S.S. informant. "Eichmann and his type of people . . . Mueller . . . we S.S. officers never liked these fellows!" "Well, I should not judge them too harshly," said Karl Wolff, and added: "After the war I was interned by the Western Allies . . . there were horrible incidents in the camps . . . yes, even suicides of fellow-prisoners. I have myself seen one of my comrades go mad, really mad. . . ." One—against six million corpses!

Reports about the progress of the extermination were taken to Heinrich Himmler by special messenger from Eichmann's subsection of AMT IV. The messengers travelled to Zhitomir in Russia, where Himmler's train was stationed in a siding. "Doctor" Kersten was with him much of the time and a new recruit had joined his personal staff—young Hermann Fegelein, the former Munich riding instructor who was courting—and eventually married—the sister of Eva Braun, Hitler's paramour. Himmler, Wolff said, seemed a little ashamed that he was so blatantly exploiting Fegelein's association with the sisters Braun as a bridge to Hitler's private circle of friends, to the inner court of the Fuehrer. From Fegelein Himmler hoped to hear what Hitler was doing and saying when none except Eva Braun could hear him—she might tell her sister and her sister might tell her fiancé. . . . Crudely, Himmler, according to Wolff, would air his ideas in front of Fegelein so that they should get back to Hitler by the reverse route. But, then, Fegelein eventually displaced Wolff as Himmler's personal representative in Hitler's H.Q. and there was little love lost between the two men.

Fegelein regularly accompanied Himmler whenever he returned to Germany from the east. Berlin, bomb-battered, had become a major target of the Allies, and Himmler's private offices were removed to Castle Aigen, near Salzburg and Berchtesgaden. He hardly ever went to his house in Lindenfycht, rarely saw his wife,

and accounts which described him as a typical *petit bourgeois* playing Skat (a popular German card game) in his family circle omit to mention that it was his mistress, mother of his two illegitimate children, and not his wife with whom he spent his few evenings away from his Field H.Q. Himmler, at all times, had his ear cocked for a call from Hitler, but when it came, usually at midnight—Hitler's habit of turning night into day often upset the routine of a dozen offices of State—Himmler's enthusiasm was damped at the thought of the sleep he was about to lose. "I cannot stand it," he would say, and complain to his staff that he was the only member of the Government who was working a fourteen-hour day and that Hitler's nocturnal conferences brought him to the verge of exhaustion. He had, he said, no time to take part in any of the social activities of the Nazi hierarchy.

Yet at the slightest hint he virtually flew into Hitler's presence, however great and unbridgeable were the barriers which separated him from the rest of the court where he had no friends. Meeting Goering, he only exchanged a formal salute. Conversation with Ribbentrop was stilted and evasive. The Service Chiefs looked upon him as an outsider and restricted their contact with him to essential discussions about S.S. units attached to the Wehrmacht. Yet, at the same time, the shadow which Himmler threw across the German political scene grew longer and darker. When they saw him emerging from one of the "under-four-eyes" interviews with Hitler even his colleagues in the Government could not disguise their curiosity and apprehension. When their representatives reported that Himmler had paid Hitler another visit speculation was rife and orders went out to harassed liaison officers to find out what they had been talking about. Hermann Goering's representative, Luftwaffe General Karl Bodenschatz, who was very close to Hitler, told me laughingly: "They always pestered me to tell them what the Fuehrer had said to Himmler. . . . They were afraid of Himmler . . . can't understand why!" Bodenschatz was certainly not afraid of anyone, but his chief, Goering, by that time had much reason to be.

"Of course, the Fuehrer discussed with Himmler matters of security . . ." one of Himmler's *aides* told me. "From time to time it was necessary to review the personages in control, test their loyalty. Himmler was responsible for the morale of the people, his task was to guard against the danger of subversive activities not only in the occupied countries, but also nearer home. . . ." Since the first set-backs in the Russian campaign the generals had hardly disguised their opposition to Hitler. They had warned him against the eastern adventure, and, when it threatened to fail, Hitler was haunted by the constant look of "I told you so" in the eyes of his field commanders. Who was there in whose eyes Hitler could be

sure to discover no trace of reproach? Himmler, of course, to whom the war in the West had merely been a sideshow, while the march against Russia was the fulfilment of a sacred mission. In failure even more than in success this campaign united its two chief protagonists—Hitler and Himmler.

Whenever I tried to determine exactly when and how Himmler rose to the baffling eminence in the Nazi hierarchy I came back to this secret, silent bond which tied him to Hitler, and even more so—Hitler to him. They were accomplices—not only with regard to the atrocities committed, not merely partners in crime, but in the even more momentous eastern manoeuvre in which the greater part of the German Army and with it the mass of the German people threatened to perish. Compared with this tremendous responsibility which they shared, the popular conception of the origins of Himmler's power was almost irrelevant. Of course, a single word from Himmler could ruin a man's reputation in Hitler's eyes; of course, he was able "in the interests of security" to take measures overriding all other considerations in the State; of course, he had not only a clique of ruthless young men around him, but also a growing S.S. army sworn to loyalty and unquestioning obedience and trained to implement their oath; of course, the thought, the knowledge that, with a man and an organization which was exterminating millions, one more corpse would count little bore heavily on all minds. All that contributed to Himmler's prestige, but the Nazi accolade which really knighted him at this strange court was Hitler's confidence.

He retained it even when Rosenberg, one of his mentors, complained that the orgy of destruction and extermination in the East had precluded any attempt to win the Ukrainians over to political collaboration with Germany. He nurtured it, he sunned himself in it. But he still needed Heydrich to tell him how to use it. He still listened to "Doctor" Kersten, his "Little Buddha," for advice and suggestions. Kersten openly boasted of his great influence over Himmler. While the limp body of the Reichsfuehrer was under his magnetic hands, there was no subject which he could not risk to broach.

Industrialists, persecuted foreigners, generals even sought his help in attempts to gain Himmler's ear through him. Later it was Walter Schellenberg, the up-and-coming S.S. Intelligence expert, who used Kersten as a tool to influence his chief. Himmler, in turn, bestowed favours on some of his ministerial colleagues by "lending" them the services of Kersten—an offer which was often embarrassing. When Kersten, on Himmler's orders, travelled from Castle Aigen to near-by Fuschl, Ribbentrop's residence, to dissipate the pains in the German Foreign Minister's back, Ribbentrop was doubtful whether Himmler had sent his masseur to cure or to kill him. There

was also Himmler's other "medical adviser" and friend, Professor Dr. Karl Gebhardt, to whose clinic, Hohenlychen, he often withdrew to put himself under observation, to diet and to rest. But Gebhardt would not let him rest; on the contrary, he encouraged the Reichsfuehrer S.S. on such occasions to conduct his business from the clinic, where he could impress Himmler with his own political ideas, recommend his own friends, obtain favours and "vet" the visitors who arrived at Hohenlychen to see his patient. In the small circle around Himmler every man pursued his own interests.

It was truly pathetic how the high-and-mighty Himmler, the dread chief of the Gestapo, the powerful commander of Germany's élite S.S. troops—a piece of weak, malleable humanity—was badgered by his best friends, pushed in a dozen different directions, inundated with suggestions and advice, exploited and overwhelmed until, to avoid complete confusion, he sought refuge in a permanent non-committal state, a position of definite indecision as immovable and bland as his features. In the battle for Himmler's ear the laurels were gradually going to young Schellenberg, who by implication, cautiously, in a round-about way, could even dare to go as far as to raise subjects taboo to all others; for instance, that the German people were war-weary and that it might be a great thing to bring peace to Germany. Schellenberg was only waiting to have a clear field with his chief before carrying the argument one decisive step farther. He did not have to wait very long for the opportunity.

In 1941 signs of opposition in Czechoslovakia, centre of vital German war industries, had begun to multiply. Himmler had charged Heydrich with the introduction of new stringent security measures in the so-called Protectorate. To impress the recalcitrant Czechs with his determination to crush opposition ruthlessly he had persuaded Adolf Hitler, in September, 1941, to appoint Heydrich formally as deputy to Baron Konstantin von Neurath, the former German Foreign Minister who was now Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. With the help of the Sudetan-Nazi S.S. Brigadier (later Obergruppenfuehrer) Karl Hermann Frank, Heydrich had "tightened up" security in Prague and intensified Baron Neurath's campaign against patriotic Czechs. But Heydrich had not been in Prague very long when it became clear that this proud and domineering man was not prepared to serve as loyally under an old-fashioned German diplomat as he served Himmler and Hitler. Only the clean sweep of an "iron brush"—as the German expression has it—could suppress the anti-Nazi patriotic upsurge in Czechoslovakia, Heydrich told Himmler. It was not difficult for Himmler to convince Hitler that Heydrich was right—Neurath would have to go so that the S.S. should have a free hand. As soon as it became known that the coveted post of a Reich

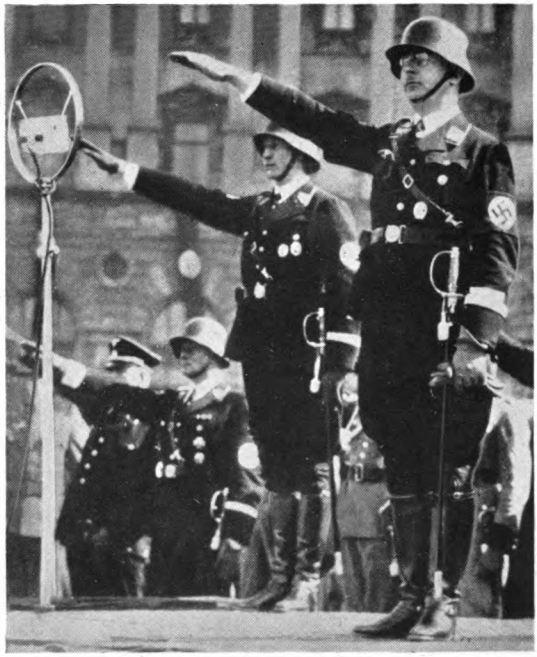
Protector would soon fall vacant, a battle of intrigue started. Karl Wolff was in the running—for it was clear that the plum job would go to an S.S. leader. Others staked a claim.

For years it had seemed as if Himmler would not gladly part company with Heydrich, that he would not allow him to drift too far away from his presence. But Himmler's appreciation of Heydrich, his affection for his young and forceful assistant, his dependence on him had long been tinged with a hint of jealousy, if not fear, and was impaired by apprehension that Heydrich's impetuosity might step-up his own pace of action beyond the control of his slow-moving brain. Heydrich, for years, had hustled and pressed him to move, to hurry, to act, to decide. Now he decided to remove this constant pressure from his shoulders—to remove Heydrich by appointing him to the coveted post of Reich Protector. Christmas, 1941, brought sad news for the Czech people. "Killer" Heydrich replaced Baron von Neurath.

Heydrich's entry into Prague was quite in keeping with his reputation. The Czech Government was dismissed. Several ministers were indicted for high treason; those who escaped the death sentence were sent to Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps. The Premier, General Elias, was executed. But after the first wave of terror subsided, Heydrich stopped acting like a bull in a china shop. It was, say even his enemies among the surviving S.S. leaders, the new and mellowed Heydrich, less arrogant, not so irascible, who now tried his hand at statesmanship and chose diplomacy as a weapon to assist the terror. He seemed to step warily; unlike Himmler, he had a very realistic down-to-earth policy which he was anxious to carry out. The Czech workers he regarded as too valuable to be exterminated wholesale, as was the fate of the Poles. It was, he was convinced, much easier to subjugate Czechoslovakia by depriving the Czechs of Czech leadership. The whole force of his killer instinct hit the intelligentsia. While sending Czech university professors, scientists, doctors, technical experts to the gallows or concentration camps, he ordered that the mass of Czech workers be bribed with wage increases, with bigger rations, with concessions of all kinds. Divide the people from their leaders and the people will soon be powerless tools in the hands of the Reich Protector.

Though he carried this policy to a great length, it is untrue—as S.S. leaders asserted after the war—that Heydrich actually came to enjoy a certain popularity with the Czech working-class. He succeeded, however, in creating political apathy among them. With the help of some of the best and most cunning Czech-speaking Security Service and Gestapo men who were drafted to Czechoslovakia, Heydrich created a vast net of informers, made denunciations a paying proposition and confused the Czech people, who

Himmler and Heydrich reviewing Austrian police detachments (1938).



Hitler greeting German students in Prague (March, 1939). With Hitler are Wolff *(extreme left)*, Himmler and Heydrich.

Conference on Reich security (1941). (*Left to right*): Nebe, Huber, Himmler, Heydrich and Mueller.

Himmler, Hitler and Goering with Heydrich's young sons just prior to the elaborately staged funeral of the former Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia.

no longer dared to trust their closest friends. Heydrich revelled in the atmosphere of Czech confusion which eased his task of ruling the country. Production at the Skoda works maintained a satisfactory level, the industrial peace was undisturbed by strikes, the isolated sabotage acts of the handful of Czech heroes caused no more than a slight irritation. Czech workers, at cheap rates, could now go to recuperate and holiday at famous spas like Karlsbad, from which the wealthy Czech and foreign visitors had been barred. Heydrich was trying to establish himself as a benevolent despot.

He moved into Brezany Castle, which formerly belonged to Count Coloredo Mansfeld, and asked Prague Police President Charvat to desist from the old practice of having the Reich Protector followed by lorry-loads of armed guards wherever he went. Instead, he insisted on driving in his open car, unattended except for his adjutant, from his residence to his office in Prague. "He has courage," his S.S. friends said, "but he will regret his foolhardiness one day." That day was not far off. Heydrich had been Reich Protector for barely six months when, unknown to him and in spite of the vigilance of his police, two men were dropped from an aeroplane which had crossed Czech territory unobserved. Fate was about to catch up with Reinhard Heydrich. The two men were former sergeants of a famous Czech infantry regiment who had fought with the Czech exile army in France and had made their way to Britain with the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk in 1940.

Sergeants Jan Kubis and Josef Gabcik had continued to soldier in Britain, where Czech airmen had taken a glorious part in the Battle of Britain, and strong Czech units, superbly trained, were waiting for the day when they could fight for the liberation of their country. Here the plan to rid Czechoslovakia of the cunning and dangerous tyrant had matured and the two men had been chosen to become his executioners. Equipped with bombs and hand grenades, with a wireless set and Czech money, they had gone out on their hazardous mission and had quickly established themselves in an impregnable hide-out near Prague. The two Czech heroes spent the next days studying Heydrich's movements and the route which he took daily from Brezany Castle to the Hradchin in Prague. Soon they decided that their best plan would be to take up position on the Theresienstadt road where a street curves off towards the Hradchin. It was a point at which Heydrich, usually driving at great speed, was always forced to slow down. They decided to act on 27 May.

It was a clear, sunny day when, as expected, Heydrich's car roared into view, Heydrich himself at the wheel. Abruptly he applied the brakes to take the curve. At that moment Sergeant Kubis threw a bomb at him. Missing Heydrich by a few inches, the

bomb exploded in the back seat, but the blast drove splinters of wood and metal and horsehair from the upholstery deep into wounds which the shell had torn in his body. Death defying, in typical gangster fashion, Heydrich, already bleeding profusely, drew a revolver to shoot at his assailants. It was too late. As the two patriots escaped, he lapsed into unconsciousness and was hurriedly driven to near-by Bulova hospital for an emergency operation.

The news of the attack reached Himmler at his temporary H.Q. near Loetzen in East Prussia, about thirty miles away from Wolfschanze, the Fuehrer H.Q. in Rastenburg. The explosion which it created in the war-time centre of the Nazi leadership was, if possible, more violent than the one which had injured Heydrich near Prague. Himmler burst into tears—Wolff, who was present, was not sure whether they were caused by rage or sorrow. With Wolff, Himmler drove to Hitler, who was in a state of frantic excitement. "Never shall I have a man like Heydrich again. . . ." Hitler was unaware of the whispers in his H.Q., according to which that bomb had in reality removed a man who might easily one day have aspired to become his successor, one of the ablest men who ever wielded the sword, the whip and the rope in his name. Himmler's rage had an obvious reason—the successful attempt on Heydrich was liable to cast grave doubts on the efficiency of the S.S. organization, the Gestapo and the Security Service. If the chief executive of these all-powerful organizations could be "picked off" that easily, what security was there for other Nazi leaders, for Hitler himself, or anywhere in the Reich and in the occupied territories in hostile lands?

"They will pay for this," Himmler threatened without elucidating whom he was going to hold responsible. There was as yet no clue to the assassin's identity, but it was already clear that Himmler's immediate reaction was to intensify the régime of terror wherever his writ went. It is a fact that from those days onwards the German régime stiffened, Himmler's methods hardened noticeably and the terror increased. At once he ordered a plane to take him to Prague, where already, on his orders, martial law had been proclaimed and the police had gone into action. Together with Wolff and Daluege he organized a wave of indiscriminate arrests which shook the country to its foundations. Before leaving East Prussia Himmler had given instructions that both Kersten and Professor Karl Gebhardt should fly to Prague at once to examine Reinhard Heydrich. "His life must be saved!" he ordered. Hitler bundled his personal physician, Dr. Theodor Morell, into his own plane and sent him off to Heydrich's bedside. An hour later he ordered Dr. Karl Brandt, Chief Reich Medical Officer, to go, too. Already, next day, the Czech Press announced the names of twenty-nine persons

condemned to death and executed at once. Whole families were wiped out, some of them without even knowing what were the accusations against them. A special announcement said that anybody found without an identity card was liable to be sentenced to death. A curfew was imposed on the whole country. By 6 p.m. the streets of Prague were deserted and quiet except for the rumbling of army tanks and the clatter of boots of S.S. patrols.

By Heydrich's bedside, in the meantime, the doctors waged a battle of their own. Kersten was anxious to save Heydrich with the magnetism of his hands, but the injured, feverish man waved him away; Dr. Brandt vacillated; Dr. Morell produced some of the special drugs which he regularly applied to Hitler; Professor Gebhardt suggested an operation. Sepsis had set in and Heydrich was weakening, but Himmler was unable to decide which doctor should have his way. For days, while the patient had to be content with palliatives, the battle of the doctors continued. On 4 June it ended in stalemate. Heydrich was dead. "Himmler," Wolff said later, "had tears in his eyes. . . ." But those who knew him believed they detected a feeling of relief. Yes, he mourned Heydrich and he missed him. But just as it had been when he had suggested his appointment as Reich Protector, so now, only more finally, he also felt liberated from the presence of a superior and dominating and dangerous mind.

As Heydrich expiated his sins and died with a sneer on his lips, the hunt for his assassins went on. A fortnight later they were tracked down to the Karl Borromaeus Church in the Resel Street of Prague and were killed on the spot; the church's chaplain, Petrik, was killed. Murder, official murder, stalked the land, but Himmler was not satisfied that the executions and arrests would suffice to re-establish the authority of the police of which he was Chief. Obviously, he argued, only a unique demonstration of S.S. strength and ruthlessness could restore his reputation. How could these obstinate, brave Czechs, how could the hostile and unyielding world be impressed with the power of Germany—and Heinrich Himmler —to punish every enemy? During the country-wide investigations into what were thought to be the ramifications of a plot linking Czechoslovakia with Britain, a Security Service agent established that a young Czech miner from the coalfields of Kladno was serving in the Czech Army in Britain.

The young man's name was Horak and he was the son of the Mayor of Lidice, a small mining village about twenty miles from Prague. At a house search at Horak's home a radio had been found, and the Mayor was forced to admit that he had regularly listened to Czech broadcasts from the British Broadcasting Corporation in London. When Himmler sifted the reports of the police inquiries and came across the Horak incident he made his decision—Lidice

would pay for the life of Heydrich and the world would have an opportunity to behold the power of the Reichsfuehrer. The story of Lidice has already been entered in blood in the annals of Nazi history. Lidice has become a synonym for the Nazi terror, and there is no need to describe in detail how one sunny morning an S.S. police regiment surrounded the village, drove off the cattle, carried away the food, loaded women and girls on lorries to take them away, put one hundred and forty-three men and boys against the walls and shot them. They blasted the buildings and burnt them down. Within a few hours there was no trace of Lidice except the blackened, smoking ground on which a once-happy mining community had dwelt for generations. The women were sent to concentration camps, the girl infants handed over to the *Lebensborn* to disappear in homes or as foster-children of German families.

Nothing the Nazis had done previously had roused world opinion quite as strongly as the massacre and the sacking of Lidice. It is a sore subject to raise with any S.S. leader, but Wolff was quite frank when I questioned him about it. He quoted Himmler as saying bluntly: "We have been too kind! It is better and cheaper to strike ruthlessly as a deterrent than to increase guards everywhere!" The intensification of the terror inside Germany, and particularly in occupied countries, became deliberate policy.

The S.S. measures in Lidice had a sequel a year later when, on 21 June, 1943, Himmler addressed a letter to Max Sollmann, S.S. Colonel and Chief of the *Lebensborn*, in which he wrote: "I order you to get in touch with S.S. Obergruppenfuehrer Frank in Prague; it would be best if you visited him. The problem to be solved is the maintenance, education and accommodation of Czech children whose fathers and parents respectively have been or are to be executed as members of the resistance movement. The Germanization must be carried out in a clever manner. Bad children should be sent to certain homes, racially good ones who might become dangerous avengers of their parents if they are not educated in a correct way should, I imagine, be examined in *Lebensborn* homes before being handed over to German foster-parents. . . ." Sollmann, together with S.S. Captain Ueberschaer, his adjutant, went to Prague and, after consultation with Frank, informed Himmler that he was ready to comply with his order. "Obergruppenfuehrer Frank," he wrote in reply, "estimates that only fifty of the children (of Lidice parents) would be suitable for *Lebensborn*, perhaps even only twenty. The transfer and accommodation of these children will not create much attention. . . ." Later, on Frank's instructions, S.S. Colonel Nickel informed Himmler's office that seven of the Lidice orphans had been sent to a home, presumably Puschkau. Forty-six children of Czechs who had been executed under martial law had been accommodated under *Lebensborn* auspices at an

internment camp at Swatoboritz. Their mothers were eventually traced to Ravensbrueck concentration camp.

As successor to Heydrich in Czechoslovakia, Hitler, on Himmler's suggestion, appointed S.S. General Kurt Daluege; Karl Hermann Frank became his deputy. S.S. continuity and terror was unbroken. It was not so easy for Himmler to find a successor for his dead favourite in the position as his chief executive in the *Reich Sicherheits Hamptamt* (Reich Security Main Office). Heydrich's body was not cold when candidates for this key post began to jockey for positions. S.S. leader Otto Ohlendorf, the economist, who had passed his battle test as Chief of Action Group D in the east, was high on the list. Gestapo Chief Mueller had to be considered. Arthur Nebe, the criminologist, also an Action Group commander, was in the line of succession, and the claim of young Walter Schellenberg, Heydrich's protégé, to whom Himmler had become attached as soon as Heydrich had moved to Prague, could not be overlooked. Schellenberg was the most determined. Taking advantage of Himmler's increasing dependence on "what the stars foretell," Schellenberg recruited a Hamburg astrologist, Wilhelm Wulff, and introduced him to Himmler, having briefed Wulff carefully on what to foretell. It was obvious that the stars shone brightly on Walter Schellenberg.

Himmler, as usual, could not make up his mind. As usual, he sought a way to avoid, or at least to delay, the awkward decision, and announced that he would temporarily take personal charge of Heydrich's department. There would not now be any appointment. Himmler's interregnum as his own executive officer later presented allied investigators with great difficulties. Every single S.S. leader whom they interviewed after the war insisted that everything evil, criminal, detestable, inhuman, that the S.S. had ever committed was done during this period. Himmler alone was to blame. While he sat at Heydrich's former desk he confided his plans or his actions to no one. Documents and correspondence which were discovered disproved this convenient theory, and frustrated attempts of war criminals to escape punishment by putting all the blame on Himmler.

Neither did this period of Himmler's "sole responsibility" last very long. Among those who urged him to hand over the arduous executive duties and concentrate once more on policy was Karl Wolff, who suggested that his friend, Obergruppenfuehrer Hildenbrand of Danzig, should follow Heydrich. Other influences pressed Himmler to appoint an outsider, someone remote from the intrigues at Hitler's court and from S.S. rivalries. They explained that Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Commander of the Austrian S.S. Sector, was such a man. By January, 1943, Himmler was at last contemplating making a choice between these two men. How he made his choice

is characteristic of the way in which high appointments were made in Nazi Germany. The new Chief of the Security Main Office, Himmler declared, would above all have to be a strong, physically fit and resilient man. Beyond the physical qualifications indispensable for an S.S. man, candidates would have to prove themselves mentally alert and capable of bearing the strain of high office. They would have to be very, very clever! But how to determine their mental state beyond doubt?

Those who have followed Himmler's career, his prejudices and methods can by now guess how he went about solving this cardinal problem. "Doctor" Felix Kersten, he ordered, should independently examine both men. Their emanations would tell him not only whether they were fit and strong, but he would also be able to feel intuitively the quality of their brains.. Wolff had difficulty in persuading Hildenbrand, a rugged warrior, to submit himself to the examination. But the prize was great and he presented himself to Kersten. Kaltenbrunner was as yet such a back-number in the hierarchy of the S.S. that he had no idea why he was called upon to undergo the test; neither would he have thought of refusing. Kersten's report was disappointing: both men, he told Himmler, showed signs of physical and mental weaknesses; both had used up much of their nervous energy; both their brains were only of average quality. There is no record about how Kersten arrived at his conclusions, neither does he mention the incident in his memoirs. But Wolff sadly admitted that Himmler did not accept his advice to choose Hildenbrand. Kaltenbrunner, the Reichsfuehrer argued, was at least ten years younger. "If we have to break in a new man," Himmler declared, "and train him for this vital work, it is better to pick one who can be assumed to have ten years' longer expectation of life. . . ."

Towards the end of January, 1943, Dr. Kaltenbrunner, virtually a stranger in the elevated set of S.S. dignitaries, was driven to Himmler's headquarters by a smooth, polite, amiable Walter Schellenberg. He had no idea that his polished escort was deeply disappointed and already hated the man whom he was taking to an interview from which he would emerge as his new chief. Kaltenbrunner was a stupid choice, S.S. leaders agreed almost without exception. But perhaps, on this occasion, Himmler was not as stupid as some of them thought. Wolff hated Kaltenbrunner, who had defeated his candidate; Hildenbrand hated him because he had beaten him at the post; Schellenberg was jealous; Ohlendorf, Mueller and Nebe disappointed and resentful. It was quite in keeping with Himmler's principles to have a man in charge who could carry out his orders undeflected by friendships, cliques and extraneous, even S.S., influences. Once, when in a gayer mood, the Reichsfuehrer S.S. had dubbed Heydrich his *"Oberverdacht-*

schoepfer," a jocular word-creation which meant that he regarded Heydrich as the Chief Purveyor of Suspicion or the most suspicious man in Germany. Kaltenbrunner, surrounded by enemies, even in his own organization, would be forced to follow in Heydrich's footsteps and could not afford to trust anyone. That was how Himmler wanted it. That was what happened. Kaltenbrunner was intensely hated by his own colleagues. They could not even pay him the respect which Heydrich's intelligence had deserved. Young Schellenberg was compensated with the appointment as Chief of Foreign Intelligence (in competition with the Army's *Abwehr* Espionage Department); Ohlendorf was put in control of the Security Service Department. Mueller and Nebe sullenly carried on. The atmosphere was glum, for, although Himmler would not admit it, the horizon was already darkening over the formidable S.S. Reich.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"PAGE OF GLORY— NEVER TO BE WRITTEN"

WHEN the sorry figures who had been the leaders of Hitler's Reich shuffled diffidently into the dock at Nuremberg, least known among them was Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, described as Chief of the Security Service, the Security Police, the Reich Security Main Office, Police General and Obergruppenfuehrer—highest-ranking survivor of the Himmler organization. The former Austrian lawyer, whom even his colleagues of the S.S. described as a *Luemmel* (roughneck), a crude, uncouth fellow, stood in the place reserved for Himmler. They had called him "the little Himmler" soon after his appointment to Heydrich's post at the end of January, 1943. Yet while his record of service was grim enough—his signature was appended to orders for execution of Germans, Jews and prisoners of war of many nationalities—while he was the superior of Gestapo Mueller and "Criminal" Nebe, it is still true to say that he was a second-rater, chosen by Himmler, so to speak, on the post-humous rebound from the late Heydrich. Unlike Heydrich, the awkward Kaltenbrunner was unlikely to challenge his chief for the leadership of the S.S. or let his ambitions even range beyond. Unlike Heydrich, it was improbable that he would insist on telling Himmler what to do, but would, on the contrary, but also unlike Heydrich, be expected to do as he was told. Hitler had often pre-viously reproached Himmler because his Intelligence Service was "inefficient and ill-informed." Kaltenbrunner, Himmler explained when he sought Hitler's approval for the appointment, had organized a highly successful network of espionage in the Balkans and would be ideal as chief of a newly reorganized, extended and intensified system of internal and foreign intelligence.

Hitler gave his approval and Kaltenbrunner took over the Reich Security Main Office which Himmler had personally administered since Heydrich's death. Kaltenbrunner, cold, often unthinking—though not, as his opponents in the S.S. maintained, by any means dull-witted—became a perfect instrument of the terror. His name acquired even more sinister associations than Heydrich's.

Once Hitler had informed Himmler about his decisions on "policy"—security, concentration camps, hostages, deportations from occupied countries, extermination—Himmler passed them on

to Kaltenbrunner, whence they went to Heinrich Mueller of the Gestapo and his assistants like "Concentration Camp" Gluecks or "Jewish" Eichmann. Execution was in safe hands. Himmler's rise dates from these days. Kaltenbrunner relieved him of administrative work, just as Heydrich's death had freed him from oppressive tutelage. Beyond that, when he saw Hitler distressed about Heydrich's death, Himmler went out of his way to prove that the death of his lieutenant had not left him helpless—as Hitler and many others thought it would. Conditions in Germany at the same time, following the severe reverses in the war, the mounting unrest at home and in occupied countries, the growing strain as a result of allied air-raids, the presence in Germany of millions of hostile foreign labour slaves, the whole precarious position which gave rise to rumours, doubts and defeatism, vastly extended the domain of the Police Minister. As every political and strategic move had to be related to the prevailing conditions, Himmler was to be found ever more frequently at Hitler's H.Q., moving in on military conferences, claiming a say in matters of strategy and the disposition of troops, pointing proudly to the sacrifices in blood and life of his S.S. divisions which had been badly mauled on all front-line sectors.

"I welcome these high casualties," Himmler declared grandiloquently, and explained that the hard test of battle was eliminating the weaklings and allowing only the "best blood" to survive, thus making the S.S. stronger than it had ever been. It was a stupid contention because casualties were heaviest among the bravest S.S. troops and Himmler was soon forced to fill the yawning gaps in the ranks of his crack units with "racially and physically inferior types" who would otherwise never have made the S.S. grade. For the time being he was still able to boast that it gave confidence to regular Wehrmacht troops to know that an S.S. division was fighting by their side. And he persuaded Hitler to give him the right to sit in counsel with the leaders of the Wehrmacht. Himmler had clearly arrived as a new force in the Nazi hierarchy. He was at Hitler's side when the news of the Stalingrad surrender spread gloom throughout Germany, stooping low to give a moral lift to his Fuehrer. "There are still people in Germany," he said to masseur Kersten on the occasion, "who are incapable of understanding Hitler's strategy. In reality Stalingrad is a great German victory."

"Hitler is infallible," he declared, "he never makes a mistake."[1] At a time when Hermann Goering was gradually disappearing into the background, Goebbels was far too busy to sit admiringly at Hitler's feet and Hitler was beginning to lose faith in Ribbentrop, it was balm to the Fuehrer's wounded pride to know that Himmler's dog-like devotion had not been affected, had even been strengthened

[1] *The Memoirs of Doctor Felix Kersten* (Doubleday and Co., New York, 1947).

as a consequence of the reverses. Hitler, who had become intolerant of advice and suspicious of his counsellors' motives, readily gave Himmler *carte blanche* for any measures which he deemed necessary to maintain morale on the home front. Now Himmler decided to aim for higher stakes and reach for the next rung on the ladder of public recognition and office. His target was Dr. Wilhelm Frick, the Minister of the Interior, his nominal chief. Himmler missed few occasions to let Hitler know that the affairs of the Ministry were not in the best hands, that conditions might make a change necessary.

While he was thus pressing his claim for new office and Kaltenbrunner was overburdened with administrative work at the Reich Security Main Office, Walter Schellenberg slipped into the vacant position of Himmler's personal friend and adviser. As Chief of *Amt VI* (Foreign Intelligence), Schellenberg had established listening posts in neutral countries and received regular reports from Lisbon, Stockholm and Zürich which enabled him to present himself to the Reichsfuehrer as an omniscient, infallible observer of the vast international background against which the war was moving to a climax. Schellenberg has contended that, already after Stalingrad, he regarded the war, if not as lost, as unlikely to end in a German victory. In the Nazi hierarchy it was common knowledge that the generals held similar views. Schellenberg was never tired of reminding Himmler of this fact, encouraging him to demand from Hitler a wider sphere of activity for the S.S. divisions. If the Army could not hold critical sectors—the S.S. divisions would. If Army generals were downhearted, S.S. officers would step into the breach. It was a theory which Himmler readily accepted and one which he could easily impress on Hitler.

But Schellenberg was not anxious to extend the power, and with it the responsibility of the S.S., in the interests of a lost cause. If the war could not be won, then surely the German leader who was able to obtain "a just peace" would go down in history as the saviour of Germany. That man, Schellenberg decided, should be Himmler. From 1943 onwards, in fact, Schellenberg began to groom Himmler as a peacemaker. Towards the end of the war, of course, the S.S. leaders outdid each other in attempts to be humane, soldierly, merciful. The scramble of the master-men to work their passages home and to escape the allied noose belongs to the most disgusting chapter in Germany's history. But Schellenberg clearly stole a march on his S.S. colleagues. He was the first in the field. To "work" on Himmler no method was too low or beneath contempt. He made cunning use of Kersten and briefed the masseur on ideas which he could whisper in Himmler's ear while the mighty Reichsfuehrer lay on the slab to undergo treatment. To Wilhelm Wulff, the astrologer, he dictated what the stars should foretell Himmler. Taking advantage of his position as

S.S. Intelligence Chief, he contacted neutral personalities in desperate attempts to get in touch with the Allies. Waging a relentless war for Himmler's soul, he tried his damnedest to undermine the Reichsfuehrer's psychopathic loyalty to Hitler.

"Mein Reichsfuehrer," Schellenberg said to Himmler one day, "fate may call on you to take a great responsibility on your shoulders. . . . What if disaster should befall the German nation, if we should lose the Fuehrer . . .?" The implication was that Himmler might soon have to take Hitler's place. To mention the contingency of Hitler's death was almost sacrilege. But Schellenberg had not risked his chief's wrath without preparing a cast-iron case. When Himmler challenged him to mention one good reason why he should even contemplate such a dramatic possibility, Schellenberg whispered humbly: "The Fuehrer's health is not too good. . . ." The subject was dropped, but Schellenberg returned to it time after time until he was able to persuade Himmler to study a report on Hitler's health. Later Himmler, inevitably, consulted Kersten, who had been warned by Schellenberg. "Look, Kersten," Himmler said, having sworn his masseur to secrecy. "Promise you will *never* disclose the contents of the papers I am showing you." Kersten promised—only to reveal in his book that, according to these documents, Hitler had been suffering from syphilis; that, from 1942 onwards, his condition had deteriorated and had been diagnosed as "progressive paralysis." According to Kersten, Himmler asked him to take on Hitler as a patient, but he refused. "I have not the medical knowledge to cope with Hitler's disease," he is supposed to have said. But Kersten, according to other sources, supported Schellenberg's contention that the Fuehrer was dangerously ill.

The Schellenberg scheme to give greater power to Himmler's elbow included a vicious underhand campaign to undermine the position and prestige of Hermann Goering, whom Hitler had officially nominated as his successor. But there were other contestants for succession. Chief among them was Martin Bormann, the little-known, reticent, mysterious "Grey Eminence" of Nazism, who had taken Rudolf Hess's place at the head of the Party organization and, more important, had become Hitler's closest confidant and constant companion. Bormann, recognizing the "advantages of a central position," had adjusted his own mode of life to his Fuehrer's strange existence, turning night into day. He was always with Hitler. Hitherto there had been little contact, certainly never any conflict, between Himmler and Bormann. Now that Himmler's star was rising Bormann began to regard him as a potential competitor, as a danger to his own position. It was not long before Himmler felt that Bormann was trying to keep him at a safe distance—away from the Fuehrer. Himmler's reaction was

to be even more emphatic, more demonstrative in his professions of loyalty to Hitler.

Just as Himmler drew closer to Hitler, Schellenberg drew closer to Himmler. Just as Himmler prostrated himself before his Fuehrer, so Schellenberg boosted Himmler's self-confidence and encouraged his ambitions. Himmler's rise, he calculated, even at the expense of Hitler himself, would inevitably take him—Schellenberg—to the top. The result of his machinations, alas, was only to confuse the Reichsfuehrer, whose new ambitions were by far outstripping his personality and his qualifications. Although he was able to snatch tens of thousands of new recruits from the Army and to put them into S.S. uniforms, although S.S. generals were soon attached to almost every Army command, the generals were still powerful enough to veto his request for a separate, independent S.S. High Command. Himmler flew to every corner of occupied Europe to inspect his units—to Oslo, where an S.S. *Standarte* Nordland had been created, a "Norges S.S." recruited from Vidkun Quisling's fascist Hird Stormtroopers; to Finland, where an "S.S. Viking Division" was stationed; to Zagreb, to see his friend, the former terrorist (and instigator of the murder plot against King Alexander of Jugoslavia), Dr. Ante Pavelic, and his Moslem S.S. unit (yes, Moslem S.S. men, one of the many new foreign S.S. Black Guard formations, recruitment of which, as Wolff said, "caused consternation among S.S. officers to whom it proved that Himmler had abandoned the original sacred, racial S.S. principles, in the interest of greater power and larger forces").

Himmler was everywhere. Driven by the indefatigable Schellenberg, he provided soldiers for the battlefront, instructed Kaltenbrunner to provide manpower for German industry; secured from the Army the right to round up Russian prisoners for work in Germany. Mueller and Eichmann brought Jews from the Balkans and Central Europe and put them through the sharp sieve of death, from which only able-bodied men emerged alive to swell the number of Germany's labour slaves. Orders to tighten up the home front resulted in a new wave of executions. Germany was trembling under the impact of blows from all sides. The Afrika Korps had been smashed in Tunisia and the Allies were installed on the Italian mainland. German cities were pounded by allied bombers, the Russians were throwing back the proudest panzer armies: "Mein Fuehrer," Himmler assured Hitler, "give me power and I guarantee you that the home front will stand firm!" It became a standard phrase which Himmler, parrot-like, in the stilted studied Nazi phraseology repeated whenever Hitler gave him an opening. In the summer of 1943 Hitler succumbed. On 25 August the German Press carried the announcement: "Heinrich Himmler, Reichsfuehrer S.S.—Reich Minister of the Interior." Himmler had

won his victory over Dr. Frick, who went to Prague as Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. Much homage was paid to Himmler. Only Bormann glowered.

"Himmler's appointment, his whole programme," said *Der Voelkischer Beobachter*, "means a clear front against every coward, every weakling. A clear front against half-measures, against every obstacle, big or small, which may stand in the way of Germany's destiny. Himmler's qualities as man and National Socialist are his greatest qualifications for his new office." It was a day of triumph for Walter Schellenberg, who had carried his campaign for Himmler so far as to have special stamps printed with Himmler's head instead of the previous Hitler profile. Himmler was flattered when shown the samples, some of which Schellenberg had surreptitiously brought to the notice of his friends in neutral countries. Publication abroad of this evidence of Himmler's enhanced position almost ended Himmler's career. When Hitler was told of the incident he summoned his "faithful Heinrich," who swore a holy oath that he had had no hand in the design or production of these stamps. "It was only a joke," he said, "a regrettable mistake."

To gird himself for his new tasks, Himmler retreated to Hohenlychen for a few days to rest on his usual diet of carrots and macaroni. He returned boldly to call a war council to which he invited his colleagues in the Cabinet: Hermann Goering, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Grand-Admiral Doenitz, Albert Speer. The situation was critical; ominous breaches in the Axis front threatened to undermine the whole structure of the German war effort. Italy was in dire straits, the incessant air-raids had created almost intolerable conditions for Germany's civilian population and industrial workers. Himmler expounded his plan to cope with the situation. He told his Cabinet colleagues that he had strengthened the Gestapo and added a new department, a Woman Gestapo, under Frau Frieda Brunner, to his organization. "The morale of our German women must be strengthened." He promised that, in speeches and writings—and with ruthless action—he would secure the home front. Promptly *Das Schwarze Korps* elaborated what he meant: "Human beings can give up many amenities. . . ." This was the answer to the grumblers and moaners. "We must all live like soldiers . . . if we want to overcome the Bolshevik menace and become immune to the Anglo-American terror . . . we must resign ourselves to a primitive existence. . . ."

Himmler at once followed up this warning with a speech. "Defeatism is non-existent among the German people," he said, and his listeners were puzzled because every day now the German papers carried reports about savage sentences by the so-called "People's Courts" against "criminals who have undermined the morale of the Wehrmacht and the home front." Himmler was aware

of the reaction and quickly changed his tune. "Isolated defeatists will be eradicated without mercy," he said. "Anybody who does the enemy's job and tries to stab the German people in the back . . . must pay for his deed and die . . . as a warning to others!"

Himmler was throwing down the gauntlet to the German people. Jews, Freemasons, Communists and Catholic priests were no longer the only "internal enemies." According to him, these had long been isolated in concentration camps or in their graves. "But that could happen to any German who played their game," he said. "Whatever happens," he added, to make his meaning quite clear, "the men of the S.S. will never lose faith, will never become cowardly or disloyal . . . and will deal with those who are!" But events, as yet outside Himmler's control, moved fast. Like a thunderbolt the news of the upheaval in Italy reached the Fuehrer's H.Q. "Mussolini deposed and arrested. Marshal Badoglio, Italian Prime Minister." The last days of July, 1943, threatened to ring in the end of the Axis. Badoglio formed a Cabinet, omitting all Fascist leaders, and dissolved the notorious Law 2693 giving unlimited power to the Fascist Grand Council. There was work for Himmler and the S.S. to do. Had he not told Hitler that security arrangements in Italy were weak and liable to give too much scope to traitors?

His first move was to suggest to Hitler that his faithful friend, S.S. Obergruppenfuehrer Karl Wolff, be sent to Italy to deal with all attempts to carry the anti-Fascist rebellion any further. Wolff, after the war, said that Himmler had suggested his appointment to remove him from Hitler's presence. The reason, he told me, was, as so often in the Nazi and S.S. hierarchy, a personal one. Wolff had applied to Himmler for permission to divorce his wife and marry another lady. When Himmler hesitated as usual, Wolff, impatient, had taken advantage of his daily contact with Hitler at his H.Q. to seek the Fuehrer's approval of his marriage. Hitler had granted it at once, and Himmler, according to Wolff, had never forgiven him for going over his head. It is characteristic of the atmosphere in these quarters that Wolff seriously believed Himmler had carried his revenge so far as to try to destroy him. According to Wolff, when he fell ill Himmler had given instructions to Professor Gebhardt to hide the gravity of his condition from him and advise against an operation. Only by accident and through the indiscretion of another S.S. leader, Gottlob Berger, did Wolff hear the truth just in time to save himself.

No other significance attaches to this incident except that Wolff's tale helps to convey an idea of the trust and confidence with which S.S. leaders faced each other. "My honour is loyalty!"—indeed! But before Wolff could assume his new office in Italy, he was asked to co-operate in the liberation of Mussolini. To find the captive Duce—for the Badoglio Government had taken every precaution to

hide the valuable and dangerous prisoner—the whole of the S.S. Intelligence apparatus was put into operation. With the conduct of the search and the eventual liberation Himmler entrusted S.S. Captain Otto Skorzeny, a six-foot-six giant, Austrian compatriot of Kaltenbrunner, a scar-faced veteran of a dozen students' duels, fearless, violent and withal a highly intelligent fellow. Skorzeny, after short front-line service, had been put in charge of the "special tasks" sub-division of Schellenberg's *Amt VI.* Now he set out to find the deposed Duce.

But while, assisted by an expert S.S. Intelligence staff, he went to Italy to initiate the search, Himmler decided that astrologers and occultists might be able to divine the whereabouts of Mussolini quicker than his secret service. A year previously, however, the best-known occultists, on Hitler's orders, had been thrown into concentration camps and, to obtain their help in rescuing his Fuehrer's friend, Himmler gave immediate orders that six of the leading occultists should be released and taken to a luxurious villa in Wannsee, Berlin, where they should be given every facility to determine the whereabouts of the Duce. After many months in concentration camps, starving and deprived of the most primitive amenities, Himmler's experts in the occult were in no hurry to oblige their liberator. Enjoying a life of luxury, smoking, eating, drinking to their hearts' delight, they dragged out their experiments until Himmler, disappointed and angry, restored them to the camps. Skorzeny, several times delayed and misled by Himmler's advice, had in the meantime gone to Italy in search of the Duce; eventually he traced the captive Italian dictator to a mountain top at the Gran Sasso D'Italia, where he had been detained at a small sports hotel.

It was there, at four thousand feet, that Skorzeny, having performed a hazardous landing,[1] together with his S.S. commandos, overpowered the guards and liberated Mussolini. Hurriedly he packed the deposed Italian dictator into a tiny Fieseler-Storch aircraft, but almost brought the daring operation to naught when he insisted on pushing his own huge bulk into the tiny aircraft by the side of the pilot. Aching and trembling, the Fieseler took off, skimming the rocks and gaining a safe height only after great difficulties. Transferred to a transport craft, Mussolini was flown to Vienna on the same day that another S.S. unit liberated his wife and their two youngest children, Romano and Anna Maria, from Rocca del Caminato, the old fortress to which they had been taken. There was jubilation in Germany at Skorzeny's success. Goebbels's propaganda machine went into action to describe Mussolini's rescuer as typical of the S.S., for whom nothing was

[1] *Geheimkommando Skorzeny*, by Otto Skorzeny (Hansa Verlag, Hamburg, 1950).

impossible. Himmler, whose idiotic reliance on spurious occultists had nearly frustrated the operation, took the credit at Fuehrer H.Q. His prestige rose. Wolff was attached to the Duce to take care that no Italian "traitors" should ever again lay a hand on Hitler's friend.

Italy's ex-Foreign Minister, Count Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law, though he was largely responsible for the removal of the Duce, had previously travelled to Germany; but suspicion surrounded him. It grew when he suggested that he should be allowed to travel abroad, preferably to the Argentine, where he proposed to live in retirement. That was clearly a matter for Dr. Kaltenbrunner. It became the new Intelligence expert's first major diplomatic assignment. Suspicious and obstinate, Kaltenbrunner at first refused to support Ciano's request until the cunning Italian suggested a bargain. He had highly informative diaries, he said, containing sensational revelations. If he were allowed to leave Germany he would hand over these diaries to Kaltenbrunner. Triumphantly, Kaltenbrunner asked Himmler to sanction the deal, and Ciano, indeed, might have escaped had not Schellenberg stunned his chief with the simple suggestion that Ciano might have hidden copies of his diaries and might publish them once he was abroad and beyond the reach of the S.S. With that the deal was called off; Ciano's fate was sealed.

Skorzeny's heroics and their propaganda exploitation could not divert the German people for long. In the face of untold difficulties, they were apathetic when they heard that the formidable S.S. officer was also responsible for the organization of a spectacular, if futile, attempt to capture Josip Broz Tito, the Jugoslav guerrilla leader, in his secret mountain headquarters, and with him members of a British military mission which included Major Randolph Churchill, the British Prime Minister's son. Himmler was aware of the deterioration in the morale of the people, but he obstinately refused to draw the obvious conclusions from the military and economic situation. Like Hitler, he was convinced that, if not the superiority of the Wehrmacht, then at least a miracle would eventually bring victory to Germany and, with it, the realization of his sweeping plans. He had been kept informed about the preparations to launch a "secret weapon," a new frightful, destructive scourge against the obstinate British enemy. Field-Marshal Erhard Milch, of the Luftwaffe, said in interrogation after the war that he and his experts were opposed to the diversion of invaluable raw materials, labour and technical experts to the production of the *Vernichtungswaffen* (Weapons of Destruction)—V-weapons, as they came to be known. Armaments Minister Albert Speer added that it was Himmler—almost alone among the Nazi leaders—who supported Hitler and pressed for an early employment of flying-bombs and rockets.

The best-informed German leaders, towards the end of 1943,

took such a grim view of the position that even Goebbels was prepared to support attempts to negotiate an armistice with the Western Powers. Goering, realizing that his Luftwaffe would be unable to cope with an eventual allied invasion attempt, had called on his Swedish friends, relatives of his first wife, to approach the Allies and, together with Goebbels, had told Hitler that there was a possibility. "One more move in this direction, Goering," Hitler retorted, "and I shall have you shot for treason. . . ." Schellenberg, taking advantage of his position as head of *AMT VI*, sent out feelers to the Allies pretending that he was acting on behalf of his chief. . . . Did Himmler know? There is no evidence that, at this stage, Himmler was thinking in terms of peace—by any other means than victory. He told Schellenberg that he had decided to make a major pronouncement on policy and to address a secret meeting of S.S. leaders. Early in October he travelled to Posen—the Polish Poznan—where the S.S. élite had been assembled. A number of Wehrmacht officers had been invited to listen to the speech, which is probably one of the most extraordinary orations delivered in the course of the Second World War.

The Russian armies were hurling back the Wehrmacht, the "West Wall" was going up along the English Channel to ward off the inevitable allied assault on "Fortress Europe." But Himmler reproduced ideas which he had formulated at a time when realization seemed possible. "For us," he said, "the end of this war will mean an open road to the East, the creation of the Germanic Reich in this way or that. . . . We shall have fetched home thirty million people of our blood so that, still within our lifetime, we shall be a people of one hundred and twenty million German souls!" This was simply another version of the old doctrine of German heavy industry which, even before Hitler had come to power, indeed long before the First World War, had visualized "a German Reich, greater than the United States, more powerful than the British Empire. . . ." S.S. leaders lowered their eyes so as to avoid the danger that they might betray their own reaction. They knew what was coming, they knew how far removed from reality was the prospect which Himmler held out before them. "That means," he continued, disregarding the doubt and disbelief among his very own officers, "that means that we shall be the sole decisive power in Europe. That means that we shall be able to tackle the peace during which we shall be willing for the first twenty years to rebuild and spread out our villages and towns and that we shall push the borders of our German race five hundred kilometres to the east. . . ."

There was polite clapping and subdued "Hear, hear" from his audience. General Sepp Dietrich, whose *Leibstandarte* had suffered fearful casualties, kept silent. He had met the enemy in hand-to-

hand fighting, and if he thought that Himmler, at his elevated observation post, had formed a slightly unrealistic view of the power of the enemy and the S.S. capacity to implement this eastern policy, he did not say so. Wolff shook his head—at the Fuehrer H.Q. he had daily been confronted with Hitler's obstinate refusal to face realities. The clever ex-officer with a profound knowledge of strategy and logistics and a close insight into production and manpower problems could no longer follow his old friend and chief on the escapades of his uncontrolled imagination. The Russians were pounding the weakening German armies at the very moment, but Himmler blandly said: "The removal of foreign races from the incorporated eastern territories is one of the most essential goals to be accomplished in the German East. This is the chief national and political task to be executed by the Reichsfuehrer S.S. and Reich Commissar for the Preservation of German Folkdom."

S.S. Generals Rhl and Ohlendorf, the extermination experts, recalling Himmler's Posen speech when they were prisoners in Landsberg after the war, said that they wondered when they heard Himmler. By a "great feat of organization" they had pushed up the rate of executions and extermination to gigantic levels. Manpower shortage had already forced Himmler to postpone the "final solution" and preserve "inferior types" as labour slaves. Was he planning to resume where they had left off only a short while ago? Did peace and victory mean that the Action Groups would have to carry on, that there would again be sufficient "fuel for the purpose"? These men knew Himmler well enough, for, as if reading their thoughts, he continued, emphasizing every word: "What happens to the Russians, the Czechs, the Poles, does not interest me in the slightest. What these nations can offer in the way of good blood . . ."—and that was clearly an infinitesimal number of racially sound Easterns—". . . we will take. But whether these nations as a whole live in prosperity or starve to death interests me only in so far as we need them as slaves for our purposes. Otherwise it is of no interest to me." He raised his voice as he said: "Whether ten thousand Russian females fall down from exhaustion while digging an anti-tank ditch or not interests me only in so far as the anti-tank ditch for Germany is finished." There were among those who listened to these words quite a number of S.S. officers who had had anti-tank ditches dug by thousands of Russian women, and when a few days later the situation on the front had changed had ordered that the women be shot and buried in these same ditches, which had hurriedly to be filled up again.

Did Himmler suddenly discover that he had talked himself into a difficult situation, that his own S.S. officers were no longer following him in complete agreement? Did he sense a mental resistance when he discoursed on the extermination of the Jews? "Talking

about the clearing out of the Jews," he said abruptly, "the extermination of the Jewish race . . . it's one of those things it is easy to talk about. One party member might say: 'The Jewish race is being exterminated, that's quite clear; it's our programme and we are doing it, exterminating them.' And then there come eighty million worthy Germans and each one has his decent Jew. Of course, this one is an A-1 Jew—the others are vermin." Walter Schellenberg looked embarrassed. To curry favour with his neutral friends, he had pressed Himmler to authorize the release of a few Jews which had enabled him to maintain that the S.S. and Himmler were not so bad after all and that "good Jews" always had a chance. But Himmler made it quite clear what he thought of such soft types who still pleaded for the Jews. "Not one of those who talk this way," he said, "has witnessed it, not one of them has been through it!"

Looking proudly at the extermination experts, the Action Group leaders, the concentration camp commandants, he elaborated: "Most of you know what it means when a hundred corpses are lying side by side, or five hundred or a thousand." Yes, they knew. But they had also, callous and insensitive as they were, still felt obliged to inform Himmler that the brutalizing effect of these mass executions was beginning to turn many S.S. men into dangerous beasts, that some of them were rapidly becoming a menace to their comrades and to the German civilian population. Once inured to the smell of blood, they were anxious to spill more, and did not care any longer whose it was. Himmler, as usual, refused to heed such warnings. No, no, his S.S. men were surely immune, most of them at least. "To have stuck it out," he snapped, "and at the same time—apart from a few exceptions caused by human weakness—to have remained decent fellows, that is what has made us hard."

The world was already shuddering at the information about the massacres which had penetrated the wall of secrecy with which Himmler had tried to surround them. Many people in civilized western countries refused to believe the extent of the horrors perpetrated by the S.S. Horrors? That was not the way it appeared to Heinrich Himmler. He made no secret of what he thought of it. "This is a page of glory in our history which has never been written and is never to be written . . .!" Mass murder—glory! But he was wrong in assuming that this page of history would never be written. Almost pleading now, he asked his listeners to confirm that there were "very good reasons" why the Jews had to be eliminated. "We know how difficult we should have made it for ourselves if, with the bombing raids, the burdens and deprivations of war, we still had Jews in every town as secret saboteurs, agitators and trouble-mongers. We would by now probably have reached the

1916-17 stage when the Jews were still in the national body."

This was exactly the stage which Germany had reached in the Hitler war, although the Jews could no longer be blamed for it. Those whose bodies had not been destroyed in the incinerators were held in concentration camps together with the flower of the nations whose people had been trampled underfoot by the S.S.

Looking back on Himmler's most important speech, contemplating the motives which led him to make this exhaustive analysis of past S.S. activities, it becomes obvious that he thus meant to bring an era to an end. The Reichsfuehrer S.S. had arrived at the conclusion that the traditional tasks of the S.S. were being successfully accomplished and that it could now safely be left in the hands of his subalterns to complete the ideological mopping-up operations. He, Heinrich Himmler, was set for new and greater glories.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE PEAK OF POWER

IF WE can believe the ubiquitous Kersten, the indefatigable masseur, Himmler's private conversations reflected the views which he had so grandiloquently and pompously expounded at Posen. Kersten spent at least one hour a day with his chief and patient, massaging his stomach, giving the Reichsfuehrer the benefit of the mysterious emanation from his healing hands. Himmler, at the same time, treated his "Buddha" to expositions of a few side-lines which he had planned for the future. The German princes would have to be exterminated, he said. Obviously, with his own S.S. aristocracy in being, there would be no room for them. The Pope would have to be arrested—that was a measure which might even have to be taken very soon. The re-establishment of Burgundy was among his early post-war plans. Franco, clearly, would have to be hanged. Kersten also opened a little window on to the world of intrigue and wire-pulling in Himmler's entourage. Without admitting that he was up to the hilt in this unsavoury battle of wits, he could not hide his hate for Kaltenbrunner whom he accuses of having had "a little affair" with Eva Braun. Behind this silly rumour, which nobody believed, was envy of Kaltenbrunner's close friendship with Hermann Fegelein and the fact that these two S.S. leaders had found a direct route to Hitler's H.Q.

But the extent to which S.S. leaders, sworn to loyalty and faithful co-operation, split up in cliques and fought each other as insidiously as they used to fight their political opponents, was apparent to all the sub-satellites who were looking for patronage in the highest Nazi quarters. To some of his colleagues Kaltenbrunner was "a contemptible Austrian," obnoxious to the Prussians like Schellenberg who had carried on the Heydrich tradition of clipped commands and aloofness.

Kaltenbrunner soon found out that his preoccupation with Intelligence (with a capital I) did not please Walter Schellenberg, Chief of the Intelligence Section, but withal Kaltenbrunner's subordinate. To Skorzeny, the terrorist, Kaltenbrunner is said to have complained that Himmler's tenure of administrative office after Heydrich's death had developed the habit of Schellenberg and Gestapo-Mueller reporting to Himmler direct instead of "going

through proper channels," which meant via Kaltenbrunner. There was little contact between Kaltenbrunner and Schellenberg at a critical stage of the expansion of the S.S. Intelligence Service. Both were equally determined to get control over the Army's Intelligence Department, the *Abwehr* (Defence), under Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. Himmler, Schellenberg, Kaltenbrunner—every S.S. leader hated Canaris, but I suspect that they exaggerated his "subversive activities" (as they described his association with non-Nazi Army circles) as a pretence to wrest the *Abwehr* from his control. Towards this end Schellenberg was moving, Kaltenbrunner intriguing and their subordinates contributing with backbiting and obstructionism wherever they could. The appointment of Skorzeny, particularly, to command a unit of S.S. Special Service Troops was one of the many attempts to outdo the Army in the sphere of Intelligence.

Hitler readily supported these S.S. moves and particularly took Skorzeny under his wing. The huge Austrian has written a verbose account of his activities which, however, only goes to show the inefficiency and futility of S.S. underground work and his own limited experience and to explain the total failure of German Intelligence in the war—whether it was directed by Canaris or by Schellenberg (who not much later succeeded in obtaining Hitler's approval for a unification of *Abwehr* and (Schellenberg's) *Amt VI* of the S.S. Reich Security Main Office).

Himmler, apart from dropping strong hints in Hitler's presence, did not greatly aid this development which ended with a theoretical further extension of his duties—and powers; neither did he take up position in the fratricidal intrigues in the S.S. leadership. Undisturbed by such minor events (or even Russian successes in the field) he moved back from the Ukraine to Hochwald, his East Prussian H.Q. not far from Hitler's Wolfschanze, idyllically situated in a beauty spot, surrounded by pine trees. Himmler's habits varied little. He was up at nine, breakfasted on a raw egg, two slices of rye toast and a cup of tea, submitted to his "treatment" and went to work. Disregarding the crowd of people who always waited for him in the anteroom—and sometimes waited all day in vain—he worked until 2 p.m., took a quick and simple lunch of soup, fish and vegetable, returned to work until dinner, which he topped off with a cigar, and continued at his desk till 2 a.m. Kersten, stressing the frugality of the Reichsfuehrer, also recalls parties and celebrations such as one which took place in August, 1943, when, Kersten says, "Himmler entertained a crowd of us to an abundant supper party. Crayfish were served and bets were laid as to who could eat the greatest number." Kersten boasts that he won the contest "with fifty-six crayfish, large ones, to my credit."

While Kersten was concentrating on crayfish, and Himmler gave

the impression that there were still occasions to celebrate and a great future to look forward to, more immediate problems occupied Hitler and the Wehrmacht. Russian pressure and the danger of an allied invasion of *Festung Europa* (Fortress Europe) rekindled hope on the occupied continent. For nearly three years Himmler's police regiments had stood guard over occupied countries. His Security Service had recruited Quislings of every nationality and the ranks of his S.S. had been swelled by Fascist units from Holland, Belgium and other conquered lands. But now Hitler was beginning to realize that, while there was no shortage of traitors and Quislings ready to jump on the Nazi band-wagon while it was heading for victory, the return trip of the Wehrmacht towards the Reich was bound to be a lonely and difficult venture. It was beyond Himmler's power—bayonets and fear—to coerce kings into co-operation when they could not in the long run count on the support of the Nazi forces. Deciding to expose them to a dose of his personal hypnotism, Hitler, in quick succession, invited the rulers of the trembling and shaky satellite states to his headquarters. A few years after the war the name of Tito had an evil ring for Soviet Russia. In Hitler's Germany towards the end of 1943 the pleasant sound of the Italian Badoglio made a similar jarring note in Nazi ears. There must be no defection like the one which unseated Mussolini and took a large part of Italy into the allied camp.

Nedich of Serbia came in answer to Hitler's call; King Boris of Bulgaria also travelled to Germany. The King of Bulgaria did not survive the experience for long. Something happened on his return flight to Sofia—a few days later he was dead. Dr. Wilhelm Hoettl, Kaltenbrunner's right-hand man, has written a book of personal memoirs (mostly based on his experience of co-operation with Kaltenbrunner in his South-east European espionage activities) in which he goes out of his way to discredit the rumours according to which Boris became a victim of an S.S. murder plot. It was known that the Bulgarian king was anxiously looking over his shoulder at the advancing Russians and ready to come to an arrangement with the Allies. That, as far as Dr. Hoettl is concerned, would not have been sufficient reason for Hitler to want him out of the way. But it is a fact that, flying across the Transylvanian Alps on his return from the Wolfschanze, Boris's German machine, piloted by a member of Hitler's own air-crew, rose so high that the royal passenger was forced to don an oxygen mask. Whether, as has been suggested, poison gas was purposely administered to him instead of oxygen, or whether he was given a faulty instrument and suffered injury to his lung, later fatal, cannot now be ascertained. Ominously, however, on hearing of Boris's death Hitler sent his own leading doctors to conduct an autopsy. Dr. Brandt, Professor Sauerbruch, the famous Berlin specialist, and

Professor Eppinger from Vienna, were hurried to Sofia. Both Brandt and Sauerbruch, according to Hoettl, reported to Hitler that a strange, probably Asiatic, poison had been found in Boris's body. As if Hitler had not known! The Fuehrer, however, to be on the safe side, ordered that the German delegation at the funeral of the Bulgarian king should not take any refreshments or food in the Royal Palace. He was clearly afraid that others might have access to strange poisons, too. Not much later Prince Cyril of Bulgaria, Boris's brother and an old hunting crony of Hermann Goering, travelled to Germany together with the Bulgarian Premier, Filov. Hitler was said to have been satisfied with their assurances.

Although there is no direct evidence on whether or how Boris was murdered, his (from Hitler's point of view) timely death was put at the door of the Gestapo and the S.S. and enhanced the prestige of Himmler by adding to his sinister reputation as a murderer who would allow nothing and nobody to stand in the way of his Fuehrer's plans. It was a curious coincidence that not much later, during a short visit to the Western Front, at which Himmler met Goering, the S.S. leader's personal chauffeur was killed by a stray bullet fired in the confusion which ensued at the Nazi dignitaries' unexpected arrival at a German unit. Himmler, seeing his old faithful servant fall dead, could not repress his tears. Wolff told me that Goering, observing the dreaded and dreadful S.S. Reichsfuehrer in tears, was flabbergasted. Turning aside, he said to Wolff: "Tears—from the *Bluthund*?"

The alliance with Bulgaria having been patched up with difficulty, Hitler decided not to take any chances with Hungary. He ordered Regent Horthy to visit him and told him bluntly that he was giving orders for Hungary to be occupied by German troops "for its own protection." The "friendly" invasion was accompanied by the usual influx of S.S. and Gestapo—in this instance a "Special Section Commando," headed by Karl Eichmann, the top expert for the liquidation of Jews. He and his staff at once arrested and deported (to Mauthausen concentration camp) the leaders of Jewish political and business life, and journalists, together with the Hungarian democratic and anti-fascist politicians. But not all of them! Already Schellenberg was pulling in the opposite direction and, anxious to present Himmler to the outside world in a favourable light, entered into negotiations and bargains with a view to releasing some wealthy Hungarian Jews—at a price.

Schellenberg made arrangements for a hundred members of the family of Manfred Weiss, leading Hungarian industrialist, to emigrate if they would pay a thousand dollars per head. It was one of many similar bargains which Schellenberg tried to strike—until his emissaries contacted a world-wide Jewish organization which was trying to save as many Jewish lives as possible. From

this organization he blandly demanded that in exchange for releases of Jews from concentration camps they should arrange for stories praising Himmler's benevolence to be published in American Jewish newspapers. Himmler was really a friend and protector of the Jews, Schellenberg told them. It is not surprising that, in their anxiety, they responded to this preposterous suggestion with the result that eventually Himmler was actually extolled as a monument of virtue in a Jewish newspaper! Jokes about kind-hearted Himmler began to circulate in New York. Did I hear right? Some American Jews, according to one report which I received, were actually singing: "For he's a jolly good fellow... !"

While Schellenberg was transacting dubious deals and Hitler was attending to the diplomatic aspects of the worsening military situation, the danger of invasion in the West and retreat in the East naturally entailed much work for Himmler and the S.S. The Gestapo was ordered to check once more on potentially dangerous elements in France, and new police battalions were allocated to S.S. General Oberg to combat the growing power of the maquis. Oberg's men eventually captured the brave Odette Samson and Captain Peter Churchill, who had been smuggled into France from Britain to aid the activities of the maquis. As prisoners of the S.S. they were transferred to the horror camp of Ravensbrueck, where Odette suffered untold tortures without betraying her comrades of the underground.

In Holland and Belgium, in the Balkans, wherever the Nazi writ ran in these ominous weeks and months, the Himmler screw tightened to squeeze the life out of every plan for resistance. In Italy, most vulnerable to allied pressure, virtually leaderless, Wolff was now lording it as S.S. Upper Group Leader and Commanding General. He also held the traditional S.S. title of Highest Police Leader. "I at once subordinated myself voluntarily to Field-Marshal Kesselring." Kesselring, Hitler's favourite general, was Commander-in-Chief of all German forces in Italy and Wolff was lucky he had been able to devolve not only the leadership but also the responsibility on to the worthy Field-Marshal's strong shoulders. When Heydrich died, Wolff said, he could have had his job as Protector of Bohemia: "I did not want it," he added in conversation with me, "and it very likely saved my head." As it turned out his appointment to Italy was an equally satisfactory arrangement for Wolff. It was Kesselring who was eventually sentenced as a war criminal for German atrocities committed in Italy, and he was still in prison early in 1952 when Wolff had once more become a respected and prosperous citizen of the community of the cathedral town of Cologne.

While Wolff was serving in Italy and was particularly concerned with the battle against the partisans behind his lines, the S.S.

Intelligence Department achieved at long last the type of *coup* for which it was—quite wrongly—notorious. German agents made contact with the partisans and offered them vast sums of money for some of the weapons with which the Western Allies had supplied them. A few of the partisan leaders fell victim to the temptation. With the Italian lira threatening to lose all value, they eagerly exchanged guns, small arms and ammunition for English bank-notes of high denomination. But, as Heydrich had already taught them in 1936, it was cheaper for S.S. Intelligence to forge English notes than to keep their unsavoury bargain. The stupid, traitorous and mercenary partisans were easily deceived. Alas, some of them on their excursions farther south into country held by the British troops or their free Polish allies passed on many a false five-pound note to allied troops. To this day some of the excellent Nazi forgeries are still in circulation on the Continent.

Himmler was proud of these small *coups* which provided him with a topic of conversation where, without such little boasts, he would have remained silent and introspective in the gayest company. He had much to think about. Goebbels was reproachful because the Security Service reports were too defeatist, presenting the German position in too glum a light—were, in short, too honest. Himmler had always taken great pride in these reports, available only to eminent personalities in the Party. Now Goebbels pressed him to stop their circulation. There were things, the astute propaganda expert explained, which it was unhealthy for the most intelligent and exalted people to know.

The conversations which preceded the suppression of the Security Service reports—there was no truth readily available in Germany—coincided with the equally gloomy analysis of the position to which Walter Schellenberg treated his chief. Schellenberg had frankly admitted that he no longer believed in a German victory. Neither, in discussions with Himmler, did he hide his view that only a quick peace could save Germany. Himmler had more or less admitted that he, too, regarded the chances of victory as remote and changed his tune. His New Year message to the S.S. resurrected a slogan of Frederick the Great. "We shall," Himmler said with the Old Fritz, "battle around until our damned enemies condescend to make peace!" But, Schellenberg hinted carefully, the Allies obviously would never treat with Adolf Hitler. The logical consequence of this view was that somehow somebody else would have to take the Fuehrer's place. From here it is extremely difficult to cut through a maze of reports and conjecture, to separate facts from interpretation. As in almost every sphere of S.S. activity around Himmler, most eye-witnesses, almost everyone "in the know," had some personal vested interest, many secrets and much reason to disguise the truth. It is, therefore, impossible to trace

Schellenberg's line of thought accurately, although he has spoken and written tens of thousands of words in explanation of every phase of political development in which he was—or was not—involved.

Schellenberg took into account the generals' antagonism against Hitler, an antagonism which turned into outright hostility as soon as the Fuehrer's "strategic genius" was threatening to bring unspeakable ruin on Germany. But he was also a loyal, even fond, *aide* of Heinrich Himmler, whose command over the Waffen S.S., the armed divisions of Black Guards, seemed, in Schellenberg's view, to make Himmler a comrade-in-arms, a companion on the battlefield of the regular military leaders. An alliance between Himmler and the oppositionist generals, Schellenberg figured, would be an irresistible combination of strength to which Hitler could soon be forced to bow. Get Himmler and the generals together, in short eliminate Hitler and make peace, at least with the Western Powers! That was the scheme in the back of Schellenberg's mind, although it is not certain whether at this stage he already saw it quite clearly defined. Among the generals, however much some of them loathed the Gestapo and S.S. methods, there were many who could visualize a successful army *coup d'état* against Hitler only in co-operation with the S.S., which would have the task of maintaining order inside the Reich in the hour of the Army's revolt. None so blind as Schellenberg and these conspirators who really thought that Britain might negotiate a separate peace with a German group which included Heinrich Himmler, even if that group were to bring Hitler's head on a platter to the negotiations. Before the details of the generals' revolt became fully known after the war, the British wartime Government was reproached because it had not responded to overtures and requests for help from the conspiring generals and their civilian tail-end, the "Men of 20 July," as they became known later on. It was most likely that the knowledge that Himmler might turn up as one of the peacemakers induced Mr. Churchill to reject all approaches.

But even to this day, although much has been written on the subject, there is no authentic and unassailable version describing the true nature of the contact between Himmler and the conspirators. Even the seemingly innocuous initial moves are shrouded in mystery. The irrepressible Kersten claims that he introduced Dr. Karl Langbehn, a Berlin solicitor, to Heinrich Himmler. Langbehn, he says, had long been one of his patients and had assisted him in one of the moves in which Kersten wrested foreign concentration-camp prisoners from Heinrich Himmler while he had him on a slab. (In one instance, revoltingly, he describes how Himmler gave him the release of some prisoners "as a Christmas present.") Another version has it that Langbehn owned a villa in Dahlem, the fashion-

able Berlin suburb, not far from Himmler's house, and that their children played together and thus, inevitably, the fathers met. Schellenberg prides himself on having engineered the contact between Langbehn and Himmler. Dr. Hoettl, of the Kaltenbrunner clique, insists that it was Wolff who brought Himmler and Langbehn together. Wolff cannot remember whether this was so or not (his national credit balance has been low in post-war Germany since he boasted of having handed over northern Italy to the Allies and he does not want to be associated with another move which many Germans again regard as treasonable). Some S.S. leaders say simply that Himmler knew what he was doing and that a policeman's lot is not a happy one in that it often forces him to march arm-in-arm with a criminal whom he wants to catch red-handed; in short, that Himmler met Langbehn in the execution of his duty as the Nazi Reich's leading policeman and security officer.

Why is it so important to establish the truth about the Himmler–Langbehn relationship? Langbehn, who was frequently seen in Himmler's company in the year 1943, was a close friend of a former Prussian Minister of Finance, Dr. Johannes Popitz. And Popitz—there is no doubt about that—belonged to the intimate circle of the men who planned the bomb attempt on Adolf Hitler which eventually took place on 20 July, 1944. Hoettl says that Langbehn never left Himmler or Wolff (no confirmation) in doubt about his attitude towards Hitler. He says that Himmler (or perhaps Schellenberg, the over-eager peace protagonist on his own account) even enabled Langbehn to travel to a neutral country, where he tried to make contact with the Western Allies! They were in conference on an East Prussian estate! Himmler also met Popitz! Himmler must have known, Hoettl screams. Himmler was a silent party to the preparation for the generals' putsch of July, 1944. It is suggested that he not only condoned Langbehn's activities, but encouraged them and was flattered that Langbehn, like Schellenberg, saw in him a future saviour of the Reich and an angel of peace. But there is a flaw in this elaborate reasoning because Langbehn was actually arrested by the Gestapo in 1943—almost nine months before the abortive bomb attempt of Rastenburg. And, like Popitz, he was tried and executed after the putsch. Hoettl is trying to strengthen his case by asserting that Himmler called in Popitz from prison for a man-to-man interview after 20 July. He says that the Gestapo and its chief, Mueller, must have known of the plot and deliberately omitted to take the most elementary precautions to deal with the Berlin end of it. It is also said that Schellenberg primed astrologer Wulff to strengthen Himmler's back for action at the appropriate moment and that Wulff predicted Himmler was under a lucky star. But many pieces in this complicated jig-saw puzzle do not fit.

It was, I think, only much later (and much too late) that Himmler was able to free himself from the bonds of subservience and loyalty which tied him to Hitler; Himmler did eventually betray Hitler, but that was in 1945. There is also an easy explanation for another tell-tale piece of evidence of which much has been made. Before Popitz and Langbehn faced a People's Court tribunal, Kaltenbrunner sent a secret message to Thierack, the Minister of Justice, requesting him "in view of the well-known facts, namely, the interview RFSS–Popitz," to exclude the public from the impending trial. RFSS was the internal abbreviation of Reichsfuehrer S.S.—that is, Himmler. "Assuming your consent," Kaltenbrunner continued in his letter to Thierack, "I shall order about ten members of my staff to attend the trial as spectators. As regards admittance of others, I request that I be granted the right of control. . . . *Signed:* Kaltenbrunner." Members of Himmler's entourage confirmed my view that Kaltenbrunner's request was made on Himmler's orders to hide the fact that the Reichsfuehrer himself had acted as an "inside agent" of his own police organization, had listened first to Langbehn, then to Popitz, with apparent favour, and finally mercilessly betrayed both traitors. There are still a few loose ends in this version, such as, for instance, why Langbehn and Popitz did not reveal more about the plot, why Himmler did not "string them along" until he had obtained a complete list of all the conspirators. The reason for that may be Himmler's crude methods which frequently failed where subtlety and not brute force was called for. He was, perhaps, afraid to wait too long, lest the plan should mature under his very nose and he be unable to scotch it. Or was he playing with fire—in the manner in which S.A. agents aided the Reichstag fire-raiser in 1933 for political and propaganda reasons? Did he remember the upsurge of popular feeling for Hitler after the abortive bomb attempt of November, 1939? Hitler, at this juncture, might have welcomed such popular reaction.

Only reluctantly I add another clue. Under the date-line of 8 November, 1943, as quoted in *The Goebbels Diaries*,[1] in which I for one have very little confidence, Goebbels is alleged to have written: "Himmler . . . told me about the existence of a group of enemies of the State, among whom are Halder (a former Chief of the German General Staff) and possibly also Popitz. This circle would like to contact England, by-passing the Fuehrer. I regard these amateurish attempts as innocuous in themselves, but naturally one must keep one's eyes on them. Himmler will see to it that these gentlemen do no major damage with their cowardly defeatism. I certainly have the impression that the domestic security of the

[1] *The Goebbels Diaries*, translated and edited by Louis Lochner (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1948).

country is in good hands with Himmler." That looks like having been written after the event.

Tension in Germany mounted. Himmler's Security Service, the Gestapo, the whole Reich Security Main Office, was busy "strengthening morale" on the home front—a difficult job when everybody was aware that the day of the allied assault on Fortress Europe was imminent. Executions for defeatism were the order of the day; each death sentence was announced by means of red posters prominently displayed on hoardings in bomb-battered Berlin and other cities. The Allies cleverly played on German nerves by announcing the appointment of General Eisenhower as commander of the allied invasion armies, and Hitler replied, somewhat prematurely, by making known that Field-Marshal Erwin Rommel would command Fortress Europe (later Rundstedt was put in charge, with Rommel and Blaskowitz subordinated to him). Allied conferences in Moscow, Cairo and Teheran were followed by effective announcements; calls went out to the great force of the European underground to rally against the Nazis. Gestapo and police officers spent weeks, day and night, hunting British agents, emissaries and liaison officers living under the nose of the harassed Germans. Himmler went on a hurried tour of inspection which took him to Norway, to France and the Balkans. Everywhere he found his officials on edge, fearful of the Anglo-American forces and their allies inside Europe. But the most effective allied weapon was the great accumulation of strength which was at long last unleashed against Hitler in June, 1944. The day of the invasion dawned and with it the prospect of the early liberation of Europe and defeat of Germany. That was the moment for the rebel German generals to strike. They waited a few weeks to see whether there was any chance of repelling the allied attack. Then they chose 20 July as the date for an attempt on Hitler's life.

The plain facts of the attempt are already common property. A young aristocratic staff-officer, Colonel Count Klaus von Stauffenberg, who had easy access to Hitler because he was dealing with the ultra-topical problems of military reserves and replacements, planted a bomb in the room at Rastenberg H.Q. where Hitler was about to hold his regular daily conference and to listen to his generals' reports on the situation. Having left the room unobtrusively, Stauffenberg, on hearing the bomb explode, telephoned to report the success of his mission to Berlin, where several generals around the former Chief of Staff, General Ludwig Beck (dismissed in 1938), waited to take over the capital, and a number of civilians under the leadership of Dr. Goerdeler, a former Mayor of Leipzig, were ready to form a government. Stauffenberg was wrong. Hitler was only slightly hurt. The Berlin end of the conspiracy, badly organized, went to pieces. A young Nazi officer, Major Otto Ernst

Remer, commander of the Guard Battalion in the Berlin Government district, co-operated with Dr. Goebbels in foiling the plotters' last hopes. The S.S. thugs of Otto Skorzeny were ordered to take charge. Some of the conspirators were shot outright; many committed suicide. Himmler, curiously, arrived only many hours later to take control of the widespread measures to suppress every hint of opposition.

The "measures" turned out to be the bloodiest purge in the history of the Nazi movement. Hundreds of leading officers were shot, others were tortured before they were indicted before the People's Court. Relatives of officers and others, only remotely connected with the implicated persons, were sent to concentration camps. When, at the end of the war, the gates of concentration camps were opened, the allied liberators found, among German political prisoners in one camp, the following: Elisabeth Countess von Stauffenberg, Markwart Count von Stauffenberg, Maria Countess von Stauffenberg, Alexander Count von Stauffenberg, Maria Gabriele Countess von Stauffenberg, Inez Countess von Stauffenberg, Alexandra Countess von Stauffenberg, Otto Philip Count von Stauffenberg and Clemens Count von Stauffenberg—every single member of Colonel Klaus's family. The surviving leaders, sentenced to the ultimate penalty, were committed to a long-drawn death. Some, like General von Witzleben, were eventually hanged from a butcher's hook.

Among the "incidentals" who fell victim to the purge was Field-Marshal Erwin Rommel, for whom the rebels had reserved a place in their post-Hitler government without obtaining his consent. Hitler sent two henchmen to his "favourite Field-Marshal" offering him the choice between suicide and indictment before the People's Court. Rommel chose suicide. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris was arrested—it was too good an opportunity for Himmler and Schellenberg to miss. Schellenberg could not resist the temptation to carry out the arrest himself. He drove to Canaris's villa in Schlachtensee and carried his rival off to prison,[1] where, to prevent his falling into allied hands, he was cruelly murdered shortly before the end of the war. But the most surprising victim of Himmler's vengeance was Arthur Nebe. Nebe, the Berlin detective and criminologist, who—in defiance of Civil Service regulations—had joined the Nazi Party before Hitler had come to power and thus quickly qualified to become Himmler's Chief of the Criminal Police, had earned the highest S.S. accolade and a full S.S. generalship by his command over one of the four extermination groups in the East, where he had organized the slaughter of tens of thousands of Russians and Jews. Himmler had him executed when he discovered that Nebe had maintained personal relations with

[1] *Chief of Intelligence*, by Ivan Colvin (Victor Gollancz, London, 1951).

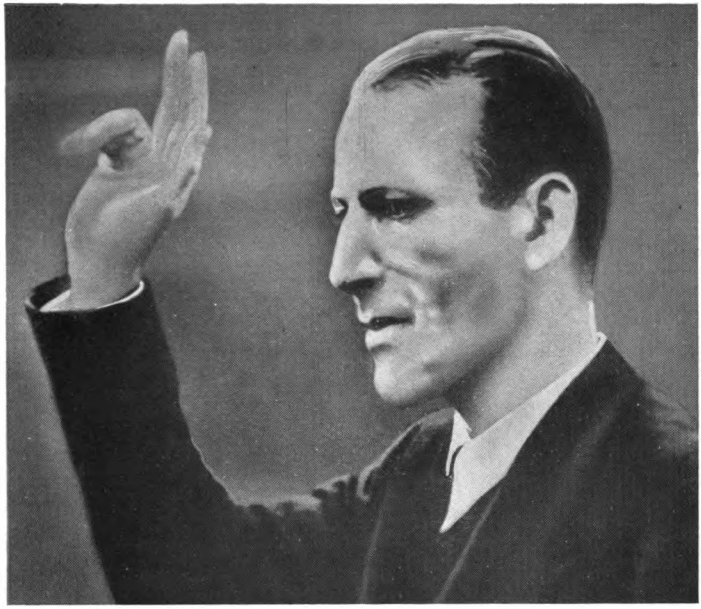
Canaris and other high-ranking Army officers implicated in the plot.

The massacre which followed the 20 July plot by far exceeded the S.A. blood-bath of 1934. But I dispute the view that Himmler's ferocity was a measure of his bad conscience. After studying the available evidence and questioning many of his *aides* I have come to the conclusion that, just as after Heydrich's death, it was rather the outcome of his embarrassment at the utter failure of his Security Organization. Of course, it is not easy to disregard the voices of those who, analysing the background of the 20 July plot, asked in unison: *Cui prodest?*—who has ultimately profited from the attempt? Himmler eventually reported to Hitler that the conspiracy had been suppressed and that every single person who was implicated and every potentially dangerous personality had been eliminated. Together they studied the documents setting out the details of the conspiracy.

To Hitler it appeared as if the seat of the conspiracy was among the high-ranking officers of the Reserve Army. Himmler had always complained about the low morale of the home-front units. Now he explained to Hitler that General Fritz Fromm, Commander of the Reserve Army, was one of the leading plotters (he was shot although he had previously ordered the immediate execution of Stauffenberg and other fellow-plotters). "Then you will lead the Reserve Army from now on!" Hitler told Himmler. At last the Fuehrer had recognized the S.S. Reichsfuehrer's place in the Wehrmacht with a major military appointment. It was more than Himmler had dared to hope. It was the reward for the bloody S.S. sacrifices on every front. It put him and his S.S. armies at long last on an equal footing with the hated, envied and now suspect regular generals. Other sweeping changes were made at the same time. Goebbels became Trustee for General Mobilization—another nail in the political coffin of Hermann Goering, who had been out of favour since the failure of the Luftwaffe. Panzer General Heinz Guderian was appointed Chief of Staff.

Cui prodest? Undoubtedly Himmler had emerged from the plot with the greatest accumulation of power in Germany. His star shone brighter than at any previous time. He had reached the summit of his career. Once more, as in the early stages of the S.S., the "security of Fuehrer and Reich" determined every move, gave unlimited licence to the man responsible for it—Heinrich Himmler. Strangely, however, his success brought him face to face with a rival personality and a danger to which he was not equal. It carried with it the seed of his inevitable personal failure and destruction.

(*Above*): Himmler's adjutants, Werner Grothmann (*left*) and Heinz Macher, after their arrest by allied troops. (*Right*): Heinrich Himmler lying dead on the floor of the Lüneberg house in which he committed suicide.



Ernst Kaltenbrunner in the dock at Nuremberg.

Felix Kersten—Himmler's masseur.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

WAR LORD

FOUR days after Himmler's elevation to the command of Germany's Reserve Army the Russians reached the blood-soaked soil from which his evil roots had drawn strength. They overran Lublin and Maidaneck extermination camp. The mass graves disgorged some of the gruesome evidence of horrors, hitherto unknown. The world was aghast. Stockholm, Lisbon, Ankara, in the meantime, busy listening-posts of both belligerents, poured out sensational news: HIMMLER DICTATOR OF GERMANY . . . He's ruthless where Hitler was hesitant. . . . He will fight in the mountains. . . . Himmler hits at generals. . . . Himmler . . . Himmler! There were many in Germany who subscribed to these views. Humbly Hermann Goering went to the microphone to order his Luftwaffe to give every support to the Reichsfuehrer: "His command . . . and mine . . ." feebly, diffidently, he linked his own, now discredited name with that of the new star.

Himmler felt big. His brother Gebhard saw the new Commander-in-Chief briefly just before he was about to attend a meeting. His nose was running. He had a bad cold. "You should take care of yourself . . . you should not go!" pleaded Gebhard. "Postpone the meeting!" "Ever heard that Easter was postponed," snorted Himmler, "because the Pope has a cold?" "He would not spare himself," commented Gebhard when he told me of the exchange. I asked Gebhard Himmler what his brother said and thought at the time. "You could never tell," answered Gebhard. "He seemed most interested in the progress of the Dachau experiments with cancer-healing herbs. He also inquired how the German pepper plants were coming on. It was one of his great ambitions to develop genuine German pepper, you know!" The German people were on the brink of disaster, experts in a dozen chancelleries were studying the implications of Himmler's promotion and watching his every move. He was worrying about his pepper experiments. "Tell Fahrenkamp I'll be seeing him soon," he concluded. "What a pity I have so little time now!" "Himmler will wield the Home Army, so that there will be no second 20 July!" said *Der Voelkischer Beobachter.* Goebbels was making his bow to the Reichsfuehrer.

When, a year earlier, Himmler had become Minister of the

Interior, some of his local police leaders had tried to give orders to the Gauleiters who were under the authority of Party boss Bormann. Bormann had objected and warned Himmler not to invade his sphere. Now Himmler returned to the attack. He told Hitler that it would be necessary for him to establish direct contact with the Gauleiters and develop before them his ideas on security and political and military strategy on the home front. "There must be close co-operation on every level between the military and political commanders!" he insisted. Hitler agreed without consulting Bormann and the gulf between the Fuehrer's two principal lieutenants widened. Already the minor figures in the Nazi drama were weighing the respective chances of the two contenders. Of those, Fegelein and Kaltenbrunner cast their lot with Bormann. Himmler himself was increasingly yielding to the influence of Schellenberg, whose real target was not Bormann—but Adolf Hitler. Schellenberg had powerful help from Kersten and Wulff, the astrologer, whose prestige with Himmler stood high. Wulff had predicted that Hitler would meet with an accident and that great honours were in store for Heinrich Himmler. Now Himmler would not make a move without the guidance of a horoscope and Wulff was kept busy mapping out the Reichsfuehrer's future—not without previous consultation with Schellenberg. If there was now new strength in Himmler's voice, it derived from Schellenberg, Kersten and Wulff, and it threw a louder echo because Hitler, for a few weeks after the bomb attempt, was silent and sick.

Silent and sick! Schellenberg had not seen Hitler for nearly two years, had had no opportunity to observe the deterioration in his appearance which those around him had noticed. But he readily believed rumours which magnified Hitler's illness. They suited his purpose. Carefully he studied reports which, quite correctly, told him that Hitler for a long time past had had recourse to stimulants and drugs. His energy was maintained by injections and new medicaments which, while they did not cure them, relieved him from head colds and alleviated pains from stomach cramps. Most of these were new drugs, invented and prepared by a Dr. Theo Morell, once a specialist in venereal disease, whom Hitler's friend, Heinrich Hoffmann, had introduced to the Fuehrer many years ago and who had become his closest medical adviser.

Reputable German doctors have described Morell as a quack and a greedy opportunist who used Hitler as a guinea-pig for his doubtful prescriptions and secured from him official sanction for the manufacture and sale of his produce. When, after 20 July, Hitler's health began to deteriorate in spite of Dr. Morell's palliatives, his other medical advisers remonstrated against Morell with the result that Hitler drew even closer to him and sacked the others. Thus the position of a house surgeon fell vacant and Hitler sought

Himmler's advice about a suitable candidate—in any case, Himmler would have to vet the man. Himmler, in turn, consulted his old friend, Professor Karl Gebhardt (of Hohenlychen), and they decided to recommend for the post one of Gebhardt's disciples—six-foot-three, portly Dr. Ludwig Stumpfegger. Stumpfegger's choice later gave rise to many rumours.

It has been suggested that Himmler had smuggled Stumpfegger into Hitler's circle as a fifth-columnist; that Stumpfegger was really the instrument of a plot, hatched by Schellenberg, to poison Hitler —and thus make Himmler fuehrer. Professor Trevor Roper has investigated this interlude in the Nazi *Goetterdaemmerung* as carefully as every other incident in *The Last Days of Hitler*,[1] and is convinced that, whatever Himmler's motive in engineering Stumpfegger's selection, the new surgeon at once gave his undivided loyalty to Hitler.

After 20 July Hitler had retired into ever-greater seclusion, reducing contacts with the outside world to a minimum.

He was fearful of assassins, whom he saw lurking in every corner; suspicious of traitors, as he described all who would not implement his—often impossible—orders. Himmler he still trusted, but Himmler was busier than ever and had little time to attend at the court. Thus the field was virtually clear for Martin Bormann. While Himmler stumped the country making speeches and threatening to "eradicate the evil spirit of complacency on the home front," while he thundered that every soldier who could be spared should be sent to the front, while he abused the generals, exhorted the civilians, chivvied officials, while, just in passing, he took charge of Civil Defence and A.R.P. (instructing his police to act ruthlessly against defeatism following the heavy air-raids); while he travelled, decreed, made new appointments, sat in conferences and captured the public imagination at home and abroad . . . Bormann began to toy with an idea. He did not as yet define it, but it was an idea on how best to combat the new Himmler menace to his own position and his hope of inheriting the Fuehrer's mantle.

Officially, although he had long been reduced to insignificance, Hermann Goering was still Hitler's legal successor, Hitler having reaffirmed his position after Hess's flight to Britain. But Bormann knew that it was only a matter of time before Goering's official status would reach the low level of his personal prestige. Himmler, on the other hand, was becoming more dangerous since his increasing hold on affairs of State and Party, on military matters and strategy almost automatically predestined him to step into Goering's shoes as Hitler's successor.

While Bormann was trying to stop him, Schellenberg, by fair means or foul, was determined to push Himmler ahead. Once he

[1] *The Last Days of Hitler*, by H. R. Trevor Roper (Macmillan, London, 1947).

pressed him to take action against Ribbentrop. "Tell the Fuehrer that Frau von Ribbentrop is getting extra rations!" he pleaded. He supported and advised Himmler to inform the Fuehrer that the Reichsmarshal's luxurious habits were having a bad effect on morale. But Himmler did nothing. Now and then he responded to Schellenberg's persistent attempts to raise the subject of Hitler's health and to discuss the position arising from the possibility of the Fuehrer's death. It was a terrible thought to Himmler. Wolff believes that the new honours and positions with which Hitler had invested Himmler had, if anything, intensified the feeling of loyalty which had been the pivot of his life. Yes, others agree in retrospect, there may have been a flicker of ambition burning deep inside Himmler, a secret, silent hope that the day might come when, nature having taken its course, fate would call him to take Hitler's place as Germany's second Fuehrer. But to challenge Hitler now, to speed that process, to end Hitler's rule prematurely—however seductive Schellenberg's suggestions—was out of the question. He could not even summon the strength to fight those who might stand in his way.

In the meantime, the summer of Himmler's success, the fateful summer of 1944, was drawing to a close. The leaves were beginning to fall when Bormann's plan had grown to full bloom. "Bormann hated my brother," said Gebhard Himmler mournfully. "Bormann was wildly ambitious, wanted power, everything. My brother Heinrich wanted nothing for himself. Only to serve the Fuehrer and the people! That is why Bormann hated him. . . !" Himmler, hated not only by Bormann, immersed himself in the study of his military problems. He inspected Skorzeny's "phantom division," a unit of three thousand specially picked S.S. men, with which the S.S. Special Service expert wanted to "teach the Army" how to go about the most dangerous and difficult military assignments. As Skorzeny, in his view, was the type of fearless S.S. soldier by whose prowess Germany would snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, he listened enthralled to a report of another "mission" which the Special Service had just successfully completed. After consultations with Hitler and Himmler, Skorzeny had been sent to Budapest to "secure the person"—to kidnap—Nicholas von Horthy, the Hungarian Regent's son, who, S.S. Intelligence believed, was in close contact with Tito, the leader of the Jugoslav guerrillas. Triumphantly Skorzeny described how his men, shooting their way past a few surprised and outnumbered Hungarian guards, carried out their orders and kidnapped young Horthy. Brandishing a revolver, Skorzeny stood by. It was good wild-west stuff, but it was hardly going to win the war.

Although in co-operation with Himmler Skorzeny continued to plan and prepare a hundred schemes, on the real battlefronts there

was little opportunity for such glamorous individual thuggery. Allied armies were advancing in the west, where Field-Marshal Kluge, suspected of implication in the July plot, had committed suicide. The Russians were at the borders of East Prussia. The Balkans stirred. In August Paris was liberated. Hurriedly Himmler gave orders to remove, to a "place of safety in Germany," King Leopold of the Belgians, who had confined himself to his castle during the German occupation. Brussels fell to the British Second Army, to whom the Belgian people gave a hilarious welcome. Himmler met despondent, questioning glances with a firm, knowing look. *"Unsere Vernichtsungswaffen werden England zerstoeren!"* he said confidently (Our V-weapons will destroy Britain!). Few, even among his intimates, seemed to share his optimism; certainly not Kersten, who was glad to extract from Schellenberg a letter warning him that Kaltenbrunner and Mueller pretended to have found documents linking him, Kersten, with Langbehn and the British Secret Service. "I request you under all circumstances to destroy this letter at once!" added Schellenberg. Kersten kept it and reproduced it in his book. The season when the more far-sighted Nazis in Germany were collecting "evidence" of their friendship for Jews and other enemies of Nazism had arrived.

For some time past Himmler had been studying what information he had been able to obtain about Britain's Home Guard. Now he applied some of the lessons and decided to call the *Volkssturm*, a German Home Guard, into being. "The enemy stands at our frontier," he orated. "I call upon every man able to carry arms. Prepare for the fight. As in 1939 we stand alone . . . the enemy must learn that every mile taken will have to be paid for with rivers of blood! Thus we shall prove our invincibility!" Emulating Mr. Churchill (1940), he continued: "Every house, every farm, every village, every wood, every ditch, every bush will be defended by men, boys and old people—even by girls if necessary!"

At the same time Himmler gave orders for the organization of units to operate in German territory overrun by the Allies. He christened them Werewolves and nominated one of his friends, S.S. Group Leader Hans Pruetzmann, to command them. *Das Schwarze Korps* threatened that invasion would result in partisan warfare on the greatest scale, fought with the utmost ferocity. "To co-operate with the Allies," it said, "would mean instant murder for every German!" An idle threat. Barely a year later Field-Marshal Montgomery had to warn his own troops against fraternization with the German people, thousands of whom I saw offering, indeed pressing, their services on the Allies, in the hope of earning a few cigarettes. The Werewolves who, the Allies feared, might carry on underground warfare after the end of the war never went into operation. Every single country occupied by

Germany had produced a resistance movement. Himmler's camps housed heroes of every nationality. On the hands of his S.S. guards was the blood of great patriots from every country in Europe. Germany herself, the country of patriots, heroes and invincibles, did not produce a single saboteur, far less a resistance movement. For a time the people's imagination was fired by rousing calls, fiery threats and powerful slogans emanating from a Werewolf radio transmitter. Alas, there was no connexion between its impressive programme and Himmler or his Werewolves. Goebbels was exploiting the idea for propaganda purposes. It was empty propaganda, but while it lasted it magnified Himmler's sinister shadow out of all proportion.

It loomed large over Germany when November came, and with it the traditional anniversary celebration of the Nazi Party's commemoration of Hitler's abortive Munich beerhouse putsch of 9 November, 1923. Twenty-one years had gone since Heinrich Himmler had taken an insignificant part in the putsch, holding on to a flag, fiercely prepared to fight, before the collapse of the putsch deprived him of the opportunity to prove his prowess. Now Hitler would not leave his East Prussian H.Q. at Rastenburg to make his customary speech. "If I leave, East Prussia will fall!" he said. "Himmler shall speak for me!" It was a proud moment for Heinrich Himmler when he mounted the rostrum at the Munich ceremony. Surrounded by the "old fighters" of the Party, by many dignitaries of State, he was at long last able to demonstrate for all to see, to prove to Germany, to the world, that he had reached the top (below Hitler), that he was now the greatest power in the land (after Hitler). "Germany Awake!" he bellowed into the microphone, resurrecting the old cry with which the young Nazi rowdies of the early 'thirties had flung themselves into street battles against their political opponents. It had not been heard for many years. Hitler's advent to power in 1933, everybody assumed, had been the great awakening. "Germany Awake!" Nazi propaganda re-echoed Himmler's call. But it found little response.

What response there was came from Martin Bormann, who had decided to act—not against Germany's menacing enemies, but against Heinrich Himmler. It was like a cat playing with a mouse. I have questioned several S.S. officials, high Army officers, survivors of the coterie around Hitler, to elucidate the details of the ensuing developments. The composite picture which emerges shows Hitler, who returned to Berlin on 20 November, deeply preoccupied with plans for "a great throw to restore the position of the Wehrmacht and reverse the fortunes of war"—the preparations for the Ardennes offensive. Field-Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, whose disappearance from command on the Western Front had given rise to many—false—rumours, had been charged with the

execution of this "strategic master-stroke" by which Hitler hoped to retake Antwerp and trap and destroy the Anglo-American invasion forces. "In this portentous operation," Bormann suggested to Hitler, "the S.S. must take a prominent part. We can no longer rely on the regular Army leaders. . . ." The insinuation found quick response. The generals, since the July attempt, were "traitors" in Hitler's eyes. He did not trust them. Yes, he could trust Himmler's men. "And why not give Himmler a chance to test himself in battle?" queried Bormann casually. "Why not give him an Army command in the field?" He knew Himmler's weakness and vanity.

When Hitler told Himmler that he had decided to send him to the front, to give him his "baptism of fire," as he said metaphorically, there were tears of gratitude in the Reichsfuehrer's eyes. The Sixth S.S. Panzer Army was the pivot of the strong forces which Rundstedt had assembled for the offensive—the famous "Sixth S.S.," which had fought savagely and successfully in Russia. But Himmler was to be given wider command. Schellenberg was dismayed when the Reichsfuehrer, with mock solemnity but with an element of genuine feeling, introduced himself as the new Commander-in-Chief "Army Group Oberrhein." It was a day of triumph for Martin Bormann.

"Bormann calculated correctly," Wolff said to me after the war when we discussed the sudden and inexplicable decline of Himmler, which was soon to follow. Bormann did not only anticipate that Himmler would not be equal to the task. He most likely even foresaw the failure of the offensive. After a swift but short-lived initial success in which the Rundstedt army deeply penetrated the allied lines, Anglo-American forces steadied the front and eventually threw back the Germans. Himmler found himself desperately hanging on to a German pocket at Colmar, hoping to save Alsace. "You can rely on Himmler, *mein Fuehrer*!" Bormann said. "He will never allow Alsace to fall into American hands!" Hitler's hopes of Himmler were high. They were not justified. When early in January the Russians were massing for a powerful offensive in the East, Hitler's Ardennes adventure was over. Hurriedly he ordered some of his best troops to be transferred to the east. Leaving Alsace to its fate, having failed in his first command, Himmler went with them, this time as Commander-in-Chief of the "Army Group Vistula."

But Himmler had not gone east without leaving on the battlefield of the Ardennes campaign at least some evidence of the fighting methods of his S.S. armies. "We were just soldiers in a different regiment," many former S.S. officers said when I talked to them after the war. "I joined the S.S. as an Englishman might join a Guards regiment!" said Karl Wolff, who rose to the S.S. rank equivalent of a full general. "One may argue about Death Head

brigades, but you cannot indict the *Waffen* (Armed) S.S.!" was the verdict. Well, after the war the *Waffen* S.S. were indicted, together with their comrades of the Gestapo, the Death Head brigades, the Action Groups and Special Commandos. Their record was not much better. No sooner had allied forces pushed back the "Sixth S.S." than at a cross-roads near Malmedy they came across a typical scene of S.S. horror. There, as the snow melted, were the dead bodies of over one hundred and forty G.I.s, and it was obvious at first glance that they had not been killed in action. They bore no weapons. One hundred and thirty-six of them, their bodies frozen, were found lying in four close rows just as they had fallen in the snow. Many had their hands above their heads, which proved that they had been disarmed prisoners of war who had been murdered in cold blood. Unarmed civilians and prisoners of war had been similarly found murdered in other near-by localities, such as La Glaize, Stoumont, Wanne and Petit Thier. It was not difficult to piece together what had happened and the few blanks which remained at the time were quickly filled in after the war. Inspecting a spearhead unit of selected S.S. men, Himmler had ordered them to put the fear of the good old Teutonic gods into all who would stand in their way. "I am relying on you to prove yourselves worthy of the S.S. runes and to guarantee victory *so oder so*" (so or so). The terror unit, commanded by S.S. Hauptsturmfuehrer (Lieutenant-Colonel) Joachim Peiper, went into action with these words in mind: "No prisoners will be taken!" Anyway, who would ever know once the Ardennes offensive had turned the tables on the Anglo-Americans?

After the war Peiper and six of his men were indicted before an American War Crimes Tribunal for the murder of one hundred and forty-two U.S. soldiers, and Peiper was sentenced to death. In February, 1951, the American Army authorities in Germany decided to revise a number of sentences of convicted war criminals. Among those whose death sentence was converted into life imprisonment was Joachim Peiper—"a fine officer, an inspiration to his men, the soul of his unit," as he was described by hundreds of Germans who signed appeals for his release. "I am quite convinced he was an inspiration," noted General Thomas T. Handy, commanding American troops in Europe, in answering these appeals, ". . . an inspiration in spreading terror and for the murder of American prisoners of war by his troops!"

"I have no doubt," said General Lucius Clay, who confirmed the original death sentence against him, "that Peiper was the real culprit of Malmedy. He was the commander of the panzer formation which was the spearhead of the desperate Ardennes offensive. . . ." The "Malmedy" case remained one of the sorest topics of conversation in post-war Germany. Skorzeny and his unit had been

in the vicinity of Malmedy and he recalls that after his retreat, when the discovery of the crime was announced by the American Army authorities, inquiries from his superior officers reached him. No, he replied, he knew nothing about it. Anyway, no German officer would stoop so low! "The files on the case are extensive," concluded General Handy's statement. "Proof is indisputable and has convinced every reader that these men (Peiper and men of his unit) have committed the crimes for which the court has found them guilty!"

When Himmler took over Army Group Vistula, Hitler personally implored him to save Danzig. Here the war had started, Hitler said. The Russians must not be allowed to go any farther! It was an impossible task. Before Himmler had properly established himself his Army Group Vistula was already forced to defend the line of the River Oder, much nearer home. Whether it was once more Bormann's insistence or whether Hitler had decided to give Himmler another chance it is impossible to say. Blusteringly the Reichsfuehrer ordered that the strategy should remain offensive. "Naturally," one of his former S.S. staff officers explained: "We were going to reconquer the East!" How Himmler went about it emerged from a few glimpses which Skorzeny permits us into the inner working of the command. On 30 January Skorzeny received an order from H.Q. Himmler: "Your units are to march to the city of Schwedt by the Oder today and to form a bridgehead east of the river big enough to enable an offensive assault to be carried out later. During the march (to Schwedt) the troops are to liberate the little town of Freienwalde, which is occupied by the Russians." "How Army Group Vistula imagined that we should liberate a town, so to speak *en passant*, is still a miracle to me," commented Skorzeny. "How we can carry out the order 'today' is not quite clear. . . ."

Himmler was giving orders irrespective of the local situation. It is true that, at the same time, he was himself bombarded with orders from Hitler, who, after a brief but hopeful excursion to a Western H.Q. at Bad Nauheim, had returned to the bunker in the Berlin Chancellery which he was never to leave again. One such court order clearly bore Hitler's stamp. Skorzeny had reported to H.Q. that strong Russian units had forced a Luftwaffe company, fighting as foot soldiers, to abandon advanced positions. "Has the commander of the Luftwaffe unit been put before a military court or has he been shot already?" The query came from H.Q. and was signed "Himmler," but it originated from Hitler, who had come to hate the Luftwaffe. Himmler, unthinkingly, had passed it on. "The unit has fought bravely!" was Skorzeny's reply. But, in another instance, implementing Himmler's orders, he ordered the execution of a Nazi Party official who, as a commander of a

Volkssturm company, had, in his opinion, failed in his duty. As a Party official the man had been entitled to judgment by a Party court, a matter for Martin Bormann's decision. When someone, belatedly, told Skorzeny, he simply replied: "We've executed him as a Volkssturm officer!" Himmler's men were only too anxious to steal a march on Bormann.

In these days also an order reached Skorzeny's special troops to attack a small wood from which a negligent Party official had omitted to evacuate two lorry-loads of documents which had been hidden there. Skorzeny's asked Himmler's view. "These are Party documents," Himmler replied; "Bormann's responsibility. We would not dream of sacrificing valuable S.S. lives for his papers. . . ." The atmosphere was tense, the Russians were probing the Oder Line with strong forces. A little later it almost looked as if they would march across the thickly frozen river when a sudden thaw saved Himmler's men. When he heard of the thaw, Himmler—prayed. In that moment, he said, he had found his faith in God again. It was a little late in the day.

It also rekindled his faith in victory. Skorzeny reports that he told the Reichsfuehrer that his N.C.O.s had overheard German orders coming from Russian tanks. Two of his men, who later escaped again, said they had been interrogated by German officers after they had fallen into Russian hands. There was treason everywhere! German officers and men were fighting with the Russians! Skorzeny had also seen disorderly German units making their way from the front line. "How, Herr Reichsfuehrer, under these circumstances, can we still win the war?" he asked somewhat naïvely. "Believe me, Skorzeny," was Himmler's reply, "we shall still win in the end!" He gave no reason for his optimism, Skorzeny adds. He had none. Already he shared in the universal failure of the Wehrmacht. His own "glorious, incomparable, invincible S.S. divisions" could no longer save the situation. They were now part and parcel of the beaten German armies. Himmler's essay in field command was as unsuccessful in the East as it had been in the West. Within a few short months the sun of Hitler's favour in which he had bathed so happily had gone under. Bormann had seen to it that his defects were not camouflaged by excuses. The generals could not disguise their *Schadenfreude* at the distress of the dilettante who had so often haughtily paraded S.S. successes before them and had missed few opportunities to denigrate the regulars. Now his disgrace was reflected in their cold stares. He felt the chill of Hitler's icy reception. The Reichsfuehrer was puzzled, helpless, sick. He could hardly think. He needed a rest. Yes, he needed a rest.

CHAPTER TWENTY

MELLOWING MONSTER

FREQUENTLY in the past when Heinrich Himmler had found himself in a tight mental corner he had taken refuge at the Hohenlychen clinic of his old friend, Professor Karl Gebhardt. For years Gebhardt had supplied him with pseudo-scientific props to bolster up his racial ideas, had advised him in the matter of the medical experiments which S.S. doctors had conducted in concentration camps, had given him the benefit of his views when they discussed Ahnenerbe problems (and Ahnenerbe authorities had only recently become a little nervous lest their skulls of murdered Soviet commissars should fall into allied hands). For all these services Himmler had appointed Gebhardt to the rank of S.S. Obergruppenfuehrer, and Hohenlychen, in the course of the years, had become Himmler's "alternative H.Q." Gebhardt was regarded as one of Himmler's closest advisers because the Reichsfuehrer had so often emerged from Hohenlychen with decisions which, in the hour of crisis, he had postponed or evaded. When, in this last February of his life, he knocked once more at the gates of Hohenlychen, nobody could have read in his unchanged, bland, inexpressive, podgy features that the little man was approaching his greatest, his final crisis. There was no advice Gebhardt could offer now, hardly any influence he could bring to bear on his patient. And only Schellenberg was perturbed to know that the Reichsfuehrer was once more in Gebhardt's grip.

On the other hand, at Hohenlychen Himmler was at least able to shut out some of the familiar voices whose sound had no longer such a pleasant ring in his ear. He had particularly become a little afraid of Kaltenbrunner's unbridled extremism, with which—though he had always praised and encouraged it—he could no longer keep in step. Kaltenbrunner was echoing Hitler's nihilism, conjuring up images of mass-murder and destruction in which Germany and her enemies would perish together—particularly those of her enemies who were in the concentration camps. From Hitler's Chancellery Kaltenbrunner would drive to the Kurfuerstenstrasse, to the office of extermination expert Eichmann, who, like him, came from Linz in Austria. There, around a luncheon table, the talk was still, cynically, roughly, about "killing off the vermin," of

evacuating prisoners from concentration camps before the Allies could liberate them. Mueller of the Gestapo, chiefly concerned with "prominent prisoners," supplied lists of names. He also hinted at mysterious news and, although they all knew that with the help of an elaborate wireless installation in the cellar of his office in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse he was listening to British, American and Russian broadcasts, nobody dared to ask him what he had heard.

It was in these days, too, that Eichmann said "he would leap laughing to his grave because the feeling that he had five million people on his conscience would give him extraordinary satisfaction." (Not much later Eichmann disappeared and was never heard of again.) Kaltenbrunner would laughingly reply that he might yet have to dispatch a few more people into another world. "The Fuehrer has only recently repeated," he said, "that the end of the war would see the complete extermination of the Jews—no matter who won!" This sort of talk was by now quite out of keeping with the thoughts of the Reichsfuehrer, in whose service they had practised their art of extermination. Recalling the old days when Himmler had signed an order that it was quite proper "to use weapons when dealing with Russian prisoners of war," they sneered when they learned of his new instructions that captive Russians should be "treated humanely." Was the monster mellowing? The blows of fate had softened him, but in this instance he had relented because the Army authorities had warned him that German troops were uneasy and fearful lest the Russians should avenge S.S. cruelties on the ever-increasing number of German prisoners in their hands. Many of these prisoners were S.S. men of Army Group Vistula, the command of which Himmler was just about to hand over to General Gottwald Heinrici.

Abroad Himmler's reputation was still that of an active indispensable commander in the field when, in mid-February, 1945, Count Folke Bernadotte, the Swedish humanitarian, set out for Berlin on the seemingly hopeless mission to meet the Reichsfuehrer S.S. and Chief of the German Police. In a little book[1] published soon after the war, Count Bernadotte has set out the details of his meetings with Heinrich Himmler, but I doubt whether he was at every stage aware of all the implications of the drama in which he played a leading part. In a moving story he tells how, while he was chiefly concerned with American airmen who had been interned in neutral Sweden, he conceived the idea that he might save many lives and alleviate great suffering if he could obtain permission to evacuate Norwegian and Danish prisoners from German concentration camps. Count Bernadotte soon learned that his plan fell exactly into the pattern which Schellenberg had worked out as

[1] *The Fall of the Curtain*, by Count Folke Bernadotte (Cassell and Co., London, 1945).

a final *coup* to advance Heinrich Himmler's cause, if necessary even against Heinrich Himmler's will.

Intensifying his campaign to build up Himmler as a benefactor (which he started with his intervention on behalf of the Hungarian Jews), Schellenberg had assisted a former Swiss President who had come to Germany to plead for the release of another Jewish group from the murderous concentration camps. He had persuaded Himmler to give his consent, but the plan had collapsed when Himmler had sought Hitler's approval. "Not unless the Swiss pay for these Jews, so that we can buy some lorries for the Wehrmacht in Switzerland!" was Hitler's blackmailing reply. Schellenberg had always to contend with opposition from Kaltenbrunner, who would usually invoke "direct orders from Hitler" to wreck his plans. But Count Bernadotte's mission seemed to offer even wider possibilities —here at last was a man who could help to establish a contact between Himmler and the Western Allies!

If Bernadotte's help could be enlisted, if Himmler could be persuaded to co-operate, surely, Schellenberg thought, this was the moment to offer an armistice to the Western Powers. The Western Powers would surely support Himmler if he could get rid of the intractable Hitler and would undertake to hold the Eastern Front and prevent the Russians advancing farther into Europe. If he could negotiate such an arrangement Himmler would automatically emerge as the new Fuehrer of a new Germany to which he had brought peace and salvation in the nick of time. Schellenberg had neither given up hope nor abandoned his illusions. There was so much at stake for Himmler and himself that he decided not to neglect the diplomatic niceties. Studiously he observed the protocol and arranged for the Swedish Count to meet Joachim Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister, and his own superior, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, before he saw Himmler.

The arrangements suited the Count, who was afraid that Kaltenbrunner might even obstruct his own limited objective—of Schellenberg's ultimate plan he knew as yet nothing. When he visited Kaltenbrunner at the latter's villa in Wannsee on the fringe of Berlin he first raised the subject of German–Swedish relations and found Kaltenbrunner interested. The imprisonment of Norwegian hostages, he said, had roused Swedish public opinion. "Yes, yes," agreed Kaltenbrunner, "but the taking of hostages has proved necessary in the fight against sabotage. . . ." Kaltenbrunner asked the Count to make concrete proposals. "I want exit permits for Swedish women who are married to Germans and permission for the Swedish Red Cross to work in internment camps," he said cautiously. Kaltenbrunner seemed to appreciate his point. It was a matter for Himmler to decide. At the Foreign Office, the same day, Bernadotte was treated to one of Ribbentrop's interminable.

pompous, futile orations. As the last obstacle on his road to Heinrich Himmler's presence, he bore it with patience. The interview with Himmler was scheduled to take place on 12 February and Schellenberg was there to accompany the Count on his drive to Hohenlychen, which is about seventy miles north of Berlin.

The clinic was already crowded with wounded, particularly with children who had fled from eastern parts and come to Hohenlychen suffering from frost-bite. Many had their tiny limbs amputated. Professor Gebhardt himself, Count Bernadotte said, was suffering from pneumonia and received the guest in his sick-room. At last Count Bernadotte was taken to Himmler for the first of their four interviews. "He looked a typical unimportant official," the Count wrote, describing his first impression, "and one would certainly have passed him in the street without noticing him. He has small, well-shaped, delicate hands . . . carefully manicured. He was humorous and amusing and frequently made use of a joke . . . certainly there was nothing diabolical in his appearance . . . nor . . . any sign of that icy hardness in his look . . . a very vivacious personality . . . with a great capacity for enthusiasm." Once more it became evident how stark was the contrast between Himmler's appearance and manner and the picture of a human monster with which his name was automatically associated in all minds. Those who expected to find a monster were disappointed when they met him. The Count had brought Himmler a most suitable present—a Swedish seventeenth-century book about Scandinavian runic inscriptions. Schellenberg had briefed him well.

The conversation, as Schellenberg had hoped, soon began to range beyond the narrow subject of release from concentration camps. Himmler spoke about the military situation, which, he said, was "grave but not hopeless." Out of the blue, as if reading Schellenberg's thoughts, Himmler made a point of emphasizing his unswerving loyalty to Hitler. "You may think it sentimental," he told Bernadotte, "or even absurd, but I have sworn loyalty to Adolf Hitler, and as a soldier and as a German I cannot go back on my oath. Because of this I cannot do anything in opposition to the Fuehrer's plans and wishes!" At the time Himmler may have only referred to the proposed releases of prisoners for which, he said, he would have to obtain Hitler's consent. But it looked as if he had purposely applied a brake to halt his progress along the course which Schellenberg wanted him to take. In the moment of temptation he withdrew from his advanced position and, as usual, turned violently in the opposite direction. "Is it your intention," he asked the Count brusquely, "that the Norwegians and Danes now in German concentration camps, whom you want sent to Sweden, shall there be given police training? . . . If I were to agree to your proposals the Swedish papers would announce in

big headlines that the war criminal Himmler, in terror of punishment for his crimes, was trying to buy his freedom."

Schellenberg winced, but Himmler went on. The Allies had started the system of dropping saboteurs by parachute. The Allies were responsible for the deterioration of conditions in occupied countries. It had been essential to be ruthless where the populations had begun to fight the Germans openly. Anyway—what concession would Germany get if the Count's request were met? "One felt the shadow of Hitler," Bernadotte added. It seemed to him as if Himmler's hands were tied. "He was not so powerful as many believed," the Count concluded; "the Fuehrer was alive and, whatever the reason, he could not be ignored." Himmler, in the end, promised many concessions. He would also, he said, if the necessity arose, hand over interned Jews to the allied authorities instead of removing them. (Such instructions were eventually given, but Schellenberg said at Nuremberg that Kaltenbrunner countermanded them "on Hitler's orders.") Himmler was certainly mellowing. "Have you chosen a good chauffeur for the Count?" he asked Schellenberg as the interview came to an end. Tank-traps and barricades made the journey to Berlin hazardous. "Otherwise," Himmler said smilingly, "the Swedish papers might come out with big headlines: WAR CRIMINAL HIMMLER MURDERS COUNT BERNADOTTE." The Count's plans ran into many snags. "I shall not assist you in this matter"—the transfer of concentration-camp prisoners to Sweden—Kaltenbrunner told him brutally during their next interview. But patiently the great Swede carried on and Schellenberg was most helpful—in order to further his own ends.

Himmler sought refuge in pains and cramps and used them as an excuse for inactivity and indecision in critical days. Weeks were spent in futile conversations with Gebhardt, in meditations with Schellenberg, in idle talk with Rudolf Brandt, his secretary. Himmler could not even face his S.S. generals, and tried to hide his embarrassment and dejection behind a show of ruthlessness. He dismissed S.S. Group Leader Paul Hausser, an old friend who had graduated from a Junker School to the command of the S.S. division "Das Reich" (and at its head once conquered Kharkov), as soon as the division was forced to retreat. He let Group Leader Felix Steiner, Commander of the S.S. division "Viking," cool his heels and wait in vain for days in his anteroom without granting him an interview. "Once we thought we were all equal," Wolff said. "Himmler had described himself to us as *primus inter pares* . . . now he was upstage, aloof. The old comradeship had vanished. His best friends began to hate him. But he was not really himself," Wolff concluded. Wolff, however, was an exception to the rule and had free access to Himmler whenever he called.

"Make peace!" Schellenberg implored Himmler, "and you will

save our country!" "I can do nothing without Hitler. I cannot betray the Fuehrer," Himmler whined. He was groping, searching for a solution, but his unimaginative mind could not see a way out of his dilemma. Early in March the American 1st Army crossed the Rhine at Remagen (and the indefatigable Skorzeny pondered how his "fighting swimmers" could attack the Rhine bridge across which the Allies poured; they tried, failed and were captured). Soviet troops had thrust deep into Silesia. A fortnight later Field-Marshal Montgomery's 21st Army Group crossed the Lower Rhine. The Russians were in Gdynia and Danzig. The beginning of April saw them astride the approaches of Vienna, to the defence of which Hitler ordered Sepp Dietrich and the *Leibstandarte*, his own S.S. division. "Attack!" was Hitler's order. The Russians inflicted heavy casualties on the S.S. units and threw them back. Hitler flew into a rage. "They are cowards, weaklings, traitors. I order that they surrender their arm-bands as punishment for their failure!" The arm-bands of the *Leibstandarte* (LAH) incorporated Hitler's initials. Graphically Trevor Roper describes how the indignant soldiers tore off their medals and decorations and sent them to Himmler in a tin chamber-pot, asking the Reichsfuehrer to return them to Adolf Hitler. They also sent the arm, complete with arm-band, of one of their dead comrades.

Hitler's outburst ended his lifelong friendship with Sepp Dietrich. It did more than Schellenberg could have done to shake Himmler's loyalty. Moral disintegration was eating into the Nazi brotherhood. Himmler felt insulted, humiliated. The first doubts about Hitler's wisdom grew from his disillusionment. Doubt turned into disagreement. The cloud which darkened their personal relations grew when Fegelein reported from the bunker that Hitler was now including the S.S. in his sweeping condemnation of the Wehrmacht, when he realized that the Fuehrer had lost faith in the Black Guards as he had lost faith in the Luftwaffe, in the Army, in everything and everybody except himself. Soon, conveniently, Heinrich Himmler admitted to himself that the Fuehrer's instructions had lately been confused and questionable; he could discover symptoms of deterioration. . . .

"Hitler is ill!" Schellenberg was quick to repeat, exploiting Himmler's mood. "He is no longer capable of conducting the affairs of the country!" Forthwith he arranged for an eminent physician, Professor de Crinis, to question Hitler's own doctors and report his findings to Himmler. Weird ideas, subtly sown by Schellenberg, germinated in Himmler's mind. If Hitler was really incapable . . . perhaps his own doctors would certify him . . . perhaps they would help to remove him . . . for the good of Germany! When Count Bernadotte returned to Germany he found Himmler grave and nervy. Tapping his teeth with his fingers, a habit which betrayed

his nervousness, he blurted out: "I am ready to do anything for the German nation!" But once more he applied the brake. "But the war must go on. I have made an oath to the Fuehrer. . . ." He was struggling with himself. Schellenberg was struggling with him. Convinced the time was ripe for a decisive step, Schellenberg, when Himmler left the room to take a telephone call, bluntly asked Count Bernadotte to go and see Eisenhower to discuss a capitulation on the Western Front.

"It is quite impossible," Count Bernadotte told him. Himmler would have to take the initiative. And even so it was doubtful whether the Allies would negotiate with the S.S. leader. When Himmler returned to the room he was filled with gloom. "The German Government has made fatal mistakes," he said, "as for me—well, of course, I am regarded as the cruellest and most sadistic man alive. . . ." With a worried look he added: "But I have never publicly vilified Germany's enemies." The conversation did not go further, but Schellenberg later told the Count that Himmler was "in a very difficult position, torn between his desire to save Germany from utter chaos and his loyalty to the Fuehrer." At last the Count stipulated certain conditions under which he would approach General Eisenhower. The first of these conditions was that Himmler must announce that Hitler had chosen him to be leader of the German people. Himmler would also have to dissolve the Nazi Party and remove all Party officials. Fantastic thought—the armed protector of the Party to dissolve it! It was not so fantastic as it might sound. Gebhard Himmler told me that the antagonism between S.S. and Party (like the hostility between Himmler and Bormann) had become so strong that there were many S.S. leaders who were planning (after the war's end) "to march with the Fuehrer against the Party." But Heinrich Himmler had not made up his mind.

Schellenberg was not the only S.S. leader with peace proposals. Karl Wolff was another ready to cry: Enough! Information had reached Kaltenbrunner from Italy that Wolff was engaged in highly suspicious moves. He had been received in audience by the Pope—why? He had frequently disappeared for days on end—where had he gone? Wolff, on the other hand, through his own network of intelligence within the S.S., was fully aware of Himmler's contacts with Bernadotte, knew that there had been mysterious releases from concentration camps on Himmler's own authority. Most unusual! He, in turn, asked himself—why? And he came to the conclusion that the time was ripe to go to Germany and tell Himmler something of what he had been doing in the past few weeks. With this decision he proved that, if his peace moves did not live up to the best Teutonic traditions, he conducted them at least with somewhat greater courage and determination than the subtle Schellenberg.

Without hiding behind Himmler's back, Wolff had acted on his own accord. Already early in March he had established contact with an American agent in Switzerland, Allan Welsh Dulles, whose brother Foster played a prominent part in U.S. foreign affairs. From his Italian headquarters Wolff had travelled to Switzerland in civilian clothes to discuss with Dulles how northern Italy could be spared senseless destruction in a futile final clash between allied and German forces. He was, he said, prepared to surrender his troops and, as an earnest of his goodwill and ability to carry out his undertaking, he handed over to Dulles his prize prisoner, Italian partisan leader Parri—who was to become Italy's first post-war Premier.

Wolff now told Kaltenbrunner and Himmler of his negotiations. Himmler was non-committal, fearful of the Fuehrer's wrath. "I shall see Hitler myself!" Wolff told him. Kaltenbrunner was menacing and, after a second interview, warned Wolff that he would have him committed to the gallows. "If I hang—you will hang by my side!" Wolff retorted. S.S. generals were not easily frightened—not even of each other. The internecine quarrel settled on this friendly basis, Wolff obtained an audience of Adolf Hitler. Admitted to the Fuehrer's presence by the hostile Hermann Fegelein, he told Hitler—if we can rely on an account which he himself inspired—that the position was hopeless. To the great surprise of all who knew why he had come to see the Fuehrer he emerged from the interview with his head still safely on his shoulders. He also—it was 18 April—came away with the conviction that all was lost. Hitler had forbidden him to carry on the negotiations. But Wolff, in co-operation with the German Army authorities in Italy, continued arrangements for the surrender of the troops under his command. It took place on the day Hitler died. Surviving S.S. men have branded Wolff as a traitor, but he earned the goodwill of the Allies, who spared him indictment as a war criminal even though he grandiloquently tried to restore his S.S. reputation by offering to stand trial at Nuremberg in the place of his late friend and chief, Heinrich Himmler.

Wolff had hardly left Berlin when Schellenberg returned to his own peace offensive. Later he told Count Bernadotte in great detail how he had impressed on Himmler the need for immediate action. "In long talks with him," Schellenberg said, "I tried to show him that there was no longer any question of being true to his oath to Hitler . . . it was a matter of life and death for the German people!" A critical day was approaching. According to Schellenberg, Himmler summoned him and they went for a long walk. "Schellenberg," Himmler said, "I do not think we can let the Fuehrer go on any longer!" Professor de Crinis had reported that photographs in illustrated newspapers depicted Hitler almost paralysed and showing the symptoms of Parkinson's disease (*paralysis agitans*).

"Do you think what de Crinis says is true?" Himmler now asked Schellenberg. Over and over he wanted to know what he should do. "Force him to abdicate!" Schellenberg said. Himmler looked horrified. If he faced Hitler with such a request the Fuehrer would burst into a fit of rage and shoot him on the spot. "You must take suitable precautions to prevent this," Schellenberg countered. "After all, you have a sufficient number of S.S. men who can arrange an arrest of this kind."

Since Himmler still did not act, Schellenberg sought support in other quarters. He contacted Count Lutz von Schwerin Krosigk, Finance Minister, Rhodes Scholar, servant of many German governments, and arranged that the Count should meet Himmler for a discussion on ways and means to bring the war to an end. The date of the meeting was fixed for 19 April, and, although Himmler wanted to back out at the last moment, Schellenberg prevailed on him and the meeting took place. "Von Krosigk informed me," said Schellenberg, "that he had discussed with Himmler all questions . . . and entreated him to act against the Fuehrer." Himmler thanked Schellenberg for having arranged the meeting. That day the British Army reached Bergen-Belsen, the site of the concentration camp in Westphalia. The view of maddened, starving prisoners, emaciated beyond recognition, incensed the troops. Soon they found thousands of dead bodies piled up in heaps. In the barracks men and women, ridden with disease, too weak to move, were lying in their own excrements. The gas-ovens revealed their sordid secrets. There was an outcry all over the civilized world. There had been an epidemic in Belsen and Himmler had known of it. "I have received a report," he had written in a circular letter (copies to Pohl, Gluecks, Kaltenbrunner, Grawitz (S.S. Doctor), and Kersten), "that in the camp Bergen-Belsen typhoid fever has broken out and that the Jewish inmates are especially affected. It is my wish that all those affected by the epidemic be given every necessary medical attention. We cannot afford to have epidemics in Germany. . . . The prisoners are under my special protection. . . . Himmler."

"Under my special protection." It had an ominous ring. The letter never left the offices of any of the S.S. leaders to whom it was addressed. "The whole thing is senseless," Himmler told Schellenberg when the waves of western indignation began to beat against his insensitive brain. "It won't in any case make any difference to me, but you must not believe in this propaganda. It isn't true." One moment he was thinking of death, in the next he made plans for the future.

The day after the liberation of Belsen was Hitler's birthday. There was a small celebration, a detachment of Hitler Youth came to pay their respects; Goebbels, Goering, Himmler added their own felicitations. Himmler attended a conference in which the subject of

a move to southern Germany was raised. Like the others, he implored Hitler to leave the doomed city of Berlin and establish his headquarters in Berchtesgaden. Hitler did not make a decision. From the bunker Himmler travelled to Hohenlychen through the night. In a state of great nervous tension he addressed his faithful *aide*: "Schellenberg," he said, "I am filled with horror at the thought of what is now coming. . . ." Then he talked about the measures he would take if . . . if he had power. Schellenberg had suggested that he should do away with the Nazi Party and found a new one. "What name do you suggest?" Himmler asked. "*Partei der Nationalen Einheit*" (Party of National Unity), Schellenberg replied.

From the Fuehrer H.Q. in the Chancellery bunker, in the meantime, inquiries reached Himmler about S.S. Group Leader Steiner and his division. The Russians were at the gates of Berlin. "Here the Russians will suffer their greatest defeat," Hitler had screamed only a few days earlier. Now he wanted Steiner and his S.S. troops, reinforced by odd companies from here, a battalion from there, to mount an offensive to relieve the city. "But Hitler's orders bore no relation now to reality," wrote Trevor Roper in his classic description. "He was moving imaginary battalions, making academic plans, disposing non-existent formations. The Steiner attack was the last, the most symbolic instance of Hitler's personal strategy; it never took place." Himmler, however, thought Steiner had collected enough troops to attack and told Hitler the action was under way. At the *Lagebesprechung* (discussion on the situation), Hitler's daily conference, a routine to which he stuck to the end, it became evident that there had been no attack. The Russians were already in the suburbs of Berlin.

The revelation threw Hitler into a wild rage. Fegelein telephoned Himmler to tell him about the new outburst. He said that Hitler, when he had calmed down, had announced his decision to stay in Berlin and await the end. Himmler knew full well that, once he had made up his mind, Hitler would never change it. In a telephone conversation he made a perfunctory attempt to persuade Hitler to reverse his decision and go south while there was still time. A few more days and the last route out of Berlin, even by air, would be cut. Hitler remained adamant. "Whoever wants to leave shall go," he said. "I am staying!" The effect on Himmler was electric. Berlin could not survive much longer, he knew, and neither could Hitler. "Schellenberg," he ordered, "contact Count Bernadotte!" The Count was spending the night at Padborg, a small place just across the Danish border, when at 3 a.m. he was awakened by a telephone call from Flensburg. The Chief of the Flensburg Gestapo told him that Brigade Leader Schellenberg wished to speak to him urgently.

They met the following afternoon. It was 23 April. That day

Goebbels had announced on the wireless that the Fuehrer was leading his troops in the defence of the capital. "Hitler is finished," Schellenberg told Count Bernadotte. "Himmler has decided to meet General Eisenhower and inform him that he is willing to give orders to the German forces to capitulate in the west. . . ." To meet Eisenhower was becoming the final Nazi war aim. Goering, a few days later, prepared to fly to "meet Eisenhower." Captive in a prisoner-of-war compound, he was still hoping to meet Eisenhower. Like Himmler, he never saw the allied Commander-in-Chief, who had already decided not to shake hands with any German.

Count Bernadotte did not think the Allies would agree to an armistice on the Western Front alone. Neither did he believe there was any possibility of Himmler playing a part in the future of Germany; at best the Allies might use his services to carry out the surrender. If he had that firmly in mind they could have another talk. But before Himmler was ready to travel to Lübeck for that meeting much remained to be done. "Berlin is a madhouse," he had said when Fegelein had first given him the news of Hitler's decision. He had no intention of returning to that madhouse although there were many more details which he was anxious to know. He arranged to meet Fegelein at Nauen, halfway between Hohenlychen and Berlin. In allied prison camps after the war S.S. leaders have discussed this trip in great detail. "He was afraid to go to Berlin," said Gotlob Berger, one of the leading S.S. generals who was with Himmler at the time. "I urged him to go. I told him that he should in any case send his large S.S. Escort Battalion to Berlin and put it at the disposal of the Fuehrer." With Himmler and Berger was Professor Gebhardt. Grawitz, the S.S. chief doctor, had committed suicide the previous day, and Himmler, still doling out S.S. appointments, had nominated Gebhardt as Grawitz's successor. "See the Fuehrer and he will confirm your appointment!" Himmler told Gebhardt. Even though he was anxious to be confirmed, Gebhardt would hardly have undertaken the hazardous trip if Himmler had not pressed him! "Tell the Fuehrer that I should have loved to come and see him . . . but that I am ill . . . too ill to travel any farther!" With this message Gebhardt went to the bunker and received Hitler's confirmation. "Himmler was afraid to look Hitler in the eye!" said Wolff.

While Himmler stayed in Nauen, Gebhardt and Berger proceeded to Berlin. Before following Kaltenbrunner to southern Germany Berger was hoping to receive Hitler's instruction on what to do with the *Prominenten* (important prisoners), who had been extracted from various concentration camps and transferred to Bavaria where they would become Berger's responsibility. *"Erschiessen!"* Hitler stormed. "Shoot them!" But the conversation had ranged over several subjects. "*Erschiessen*" had become Hitler's standing com-

mand which he applied indiscriminately to the Luftwaffe, the Army generals, the "traitorous, cowardly S.S.," and Bavarian separatists whom Berger had also mentioned. Berger could not be sure what Hitler was talking about. He was not particularly bloodthirsty and the *Prominenten* escaped with their lives. Among them were many well-known people: Best and Stevens, whom Schellenberg had kidnapped; Captain Peter Churchill, falsely regarded as a relative of the British Prime Minister; Giles Romilly, Winston Churchill's nephew. There were Russians and French (former Prime Minister Léon Blum and wife among them); Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Polish, Czech, Swiss, Italian, Hungarian, German and Austrian personalities. Politicians, statesmen, scientists, journalists whom Himmler had held as hostages were eventually found unharmed, and liberated.

On his return from Berlin Gebhardt reported to Himmler that the Fuehrer had confirmed his appointment. It was a short-lived satisfaction. A fortnight later he was a prisoner of war of the Allies, and was eventually condemned to death and executed as a war criminal. Hitler had also accepted the offer of Himmler's Escort Battalion and allocated it a defence position near the Chancellery. There was no other message. "Give Himmler my love!" was all the Fuehrer had said as a farewell. Obviously, Himmler concluded, Hitler was resigned to death. He was doomed. Death would come in a few days, any day now. It was the end of Adolf Hitler. Was it the beginning of Heinrich Himmler? Liberated at last from his inhibitions, released—he felt—from his oath of loyalty, Himmler travelled north to Lübeck for his meeting with Bernadotte. It was, the Count recalled, a night with an uncanny feeling of disaster. The meeting took place at the Swedish Consulate just before midnight. Soon after Himmler's arrival the sirens went and Count Bernadotte took Himmler to the shelter, although other people could not be prevented from using it at the same time. Caught by the allied air-raid, a few Germans drifted in from the street. None of them recognized Himmler when he spoke to them, trying to find out what the people thought. "He struck me as being utterly exhausted and in a very nervy state," Count Bernadotte noted. "He looked as if he needed all his will-power to preserve an appearance of outward calm." That same night Goering was joking with the people in a Berlin shelter and was cheered although many blamed the Luftwaffe's failure for their plight.

Himmler was still shaky when the conference began as soon as the raid was over. "Hitler will die with his troops in Berlin," he told Count Bernadotte. "He may already be dead," he added. "In this new situation I consider myself free to act. In order to save as great a part of Germany as possible from Russia, I am willing to capitulate on the Western Front . . . I am not prepared to capitulate

in the East . . . I shall always remain a sworn enemy of Bolshevism. . . ." Count Bernadotte repeated that he did not think Britain and America would make a separate settlement. "I am well aware how extremely difficult it is," retorted Himmler, "but I want to make an attempt to save millions of Germans from a Russian occupation." "And what if you receive a negative reply from the Allies?" Count Bernadotte asked. "In such a case I shall take over command on the Eastern Front and be killed in battle. . . . This is the bitterest day of my life!" Himmler appeared in great distress when he took leave of the Count. Schellenberg would deal with the details he said. He insisted on driving his own car. "On starting," Count Bernadotte recalled, "he ran into the barbed-wire which surrounded the building." He did not find it easy to extricate himself. There was, Bernadotte added, something symbolic about the manner in which Himmler made his exit.

Yet Himmler left the meeting not without new hope. His S.S. world was collapsing, but new life would grow from the ruins. Thinking of ruins, he called one of his adjutants, S.S. Major Macher, and ordered him to blow up the spiritual headquarters of the S.S. Order, the Wewelsburg. "It had cost eleven million marks to build," Wolff said sadly. "Macher did not make a good job of the destruction. The Wewelsburg was only partly burnt out. What remained—valuable technical equipment, wireless installations and the like—was plundered." North of Bremen, Himmler, surrounded by a large entourage, guarded by the still strong remnants of his S.S. Escort Battalion, made plans for the future. His secretary, Dr. Rudolf Brandt, was with him; so was Werner Grothmann, his chief adjutant, and Otto Ohlendorf, the extermination expert and last Chief of the Security Service, who was still gathering information. None of them doubted that Hitler's death was imminent and would automatically be followed by Himmler's assumption of power. Plans had to be ready when the reply to Himmler's approach to the Western Powers arrived.

Himmler's offer, in the meantime, had reached the U.S. State Department and Britain's Whitehall via the Swedish Foreign Minister and the Western envoys in Stockholm. After meetings at the Pentagon in Washington, attended by the President, and of the British War Cabinet, consultations between the two allies followed. It was decided to send a message to Marshal Stalin informing him of Himmler's offer. "The British and American Governments," added the message, "propose to reject it and to inform Himmler that unconditional surrender to the Governments of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union is the only acceptable offer." On 26 April the decision was communicated to Stockholm, where Count Bernadotte was duly informed. On the morning of 27 April he left Stockholm for Flensburg (North Germany,

just below the Danish border) to communicate with Himmler.

The next day brought fateful developments. Already Hitler was smarting under the news that Hermann Goering had "tried to usurp power" by sending an ultimative telegram from Berchtesgaden to the bunker asking for authority to begin armistice negotiations with the Allies. Bormann had cunningly seized on the telegram to denounce Goering as a traitor, induced Hitler to deprive the Luftwaffe Chief of all his offices and functions and order the Berchtesgaden S.S. detachment to detain him in his own villa. Now a second blow fell on the Fuehrer. Heinz Lorenz, an official of Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, arrived with a transcript of allied wireless reports about Himmler's offer to surrender. "Treason! Treason!" Hitler shouted. He was in tears. Himmler, in whom he had always implicitly believed, had betrayed him. This was the end! "Call Fegelein," he ordered. It was a matter which had to be discussed with Himmler's representative. For over a year Fegelein, who had in the meantime married Eva Braun's sister, had rarely been absent from Hitler's court. Now he could not be found. He had been absent for some days, Hitler suddenly realized. Grave suspicions arose. Was Fegelein a party to Himmler's plot? An S.S. patrol was sent out with orders to find Fegelein and to bring him back to the bunker. But Fegelein had simply gone home—to his Berlin apartment. There was no treason in his heart. He had decided not be caught in the bunker like a rat in a trap. He had no wish to die a hero's death and had been investigating the possibilities of escape to the south. The S.S. patrol took him back to the bunker, where he was put under arrest as a deserter. Next night he was taken into the Chancellery garden and shot.

The ranks around Hitler were thinning out. Before his death Fegelein, on Hitler's orders, had been questioned by Gestapo Chief Heinrich Mueller. It was the last service which Mueller was to render to Adolf Hitler. A few days later he, too, disappeared. Hoettl, the S.S. expert, is convinced that Mueller, long suspected of Russian leanings, went over to the Russians. For many months past he had been in charge of wireless transmitters, captured from Soviet agents, with which he had maintained close communication with the Russians. Thus Hoettl thinks he might have been able to prepare his defection. The Russians, no doubt, were anxious to take advantage of Mueller's unrivalled knowledge of secret police technique.

Clouds were gathering over Himmler's head. He was still waiting for Schellenberg to bring Bernadotte's reply when he became aware that his surrender offer had been made public. "He blamed me for his embarrassment," Schellenberg said after Bernadotte had brought the grim news. But Schellenberg had taken the useful Wilhelm Wulff with him and, listening to another batch of prognostications,

Himmler forgot his anger. It might still be possible, he mused, to rescue northern Europe from destruction. He would facilitate surrender in Norway and Denmark and thus earn his right to recognition by the Allies. He was still hoping to meet General Eisenhower and contemplated whether he ought to salute him or shake hands. In the meantime he kept in close touch with Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, whom Hitler had appointed Commander-in-Chief of the German Forces in the North (the southern equivalent of this military appointment having gone to Field-Marshal Albert Kesselring).

Doenitz, unhesitatingly, accorded Himmler the privileges of his position as a senior member of the Government. He consulted him about all decisions. In co-operation with Doenitz, Himmler dealt with such awkward problems as Gauleiter Kaufmann's plans to surrender the city of Hamburg without a fight. "We shall soon stop that," Himmler said, and began to dictate an emotional letter appealing to Kaufmann's sense of loyalty. Doenitz proposed a more realistic message. But although the Grand Admiral was obstinate on occasions, Himmler was sure he would serve him loyally, once the Fuehrer's death would leave him, Himmler, in control of Germany's destiny. He would dismiss Ribbentrop and appoint Count Schwerin Krosigk in his place. Ohlendorf would become Minister of the Interior. The Party of National Unity would take over....

Gebhard Himmler had made his way north to join his brother. They met at his new H.Q. in Lübeck—the barracks of the Fire Police. "You cannot imagine," Heinrich Himmler said, "how hard these recent times have been. I have watched disaster approach.... I know I should have acted independently much sooner . . . but I could not do it. . . . I was tied to the Fuehrer by my oath!" Brother Gebhard echoed Schellenberg: "Your oath was to an institution, not to an individual. Your obligation is to the people!" "To be disloyal is difficult . . ." was Himmler's only reply.

His conscience untroubled by his disloyalty, Himmler hurried to Rheinsberg, where Doenitz with Jodl and Keitel, surrounded by a large military staff, were discussing the *Lage* (situation) in the same way as they had done when Hitler had presided. Now, Himmler, the obvious "successor," took the chair. He was full of his own new importance. Disloyalty? Himmler did not think of it, but it was very much in Bormann's mind. Doenitz's A.D.C., Commander Walter Luedde-Neurath,[1] said that a telegram from the Berlin Chancellery reached Doenitz. "New treason afoot," it read. "According to enemy broadcast Reichsfuehrer has made capitulation offer via Sweden. Fuehrer expects you to act against all traitors

[1] *Regierung Doenitz, the Last Days of the Third Reich*, by Walter Luedde-Neurath (Musterschmidt, Goettingen, 1951).

with speed of lightning and as hard as steel. *Signed:* Bormann."

"The telegram placed the Grand Admiral in an extremely difficult position," commiserates Walter Luedde. Relations between Doenitz and Himmler had always been excellent. Often when he had attended officers' meetings in which the topic of Army–S.S. rivalry was raised he had said: "Why worry! The Reichsheini and I are great friends!" But friendship apart, how did they—in the Berlin Chancellery—imagine Doenitz could act against Himmler "with the speed of lightning and as hard as steel?" Doenitz had no forces available for such an action. "Himmler, on the other hand," Luedde adds, "by means of police, S.S. and Home Army represented power inside Germany. His exclusion by force was impossible and could only result in chaos which Doenitz was anxious to avoid." Also, with Himmler and his S.S. entourage so close at hand, the Grand Admiral preferred to regard the foreign broadcast as a deliberate falsification. Manifestly, in the atmosphere of the Berlin bunker, its importance had been exaggerated. It was better to ask Himmler personally. The two men met at Lübeck police barracks. "Himmler," Doenitz said, according to Luedde, "emphatically denied having been in contact with the enemy." "The broadcast is an invention!" Himmler asserted blandly. But nevertheless it looked to Doenitz as if there was now little likelihood of Himmler being named Hitler's successor.

How right he was! Having married Eva Braun in a melodramatic death-bed ceremony, Hitler dictated his political testament. "Before my death," he decreed, "I expel from the Party the former Reichsmarshal Hermann Goering. . . . Before my death I expel from the Party and from all his offices the former Reichsfuehrer S.S. and Reich Minister of the Interior, Heinrich Himmler. In his stead I appoint Gauleiter Karl Hanke as Reichsfuehrer S.S. and Chief of the German Police, and Gauleiter Paul Giessler as Reich Minister of the Interior. . . . Goering and Himmler," Hitler continued his legacy, "by their secret negotiations with the enemy, without my knowledge or approval, and by their illegal attempts to seize power in the State, quite apart from their treachery to my person, have brought irreparable shame on the country and the people. . . . In order that the German people may have a government of honourable men I herewith appoint Grand Admiral Doenitz as Reich President, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, War Minister. . . ." Rudolf Zander, Bormann's A.D.C., was ordered to take a copy of this will through the Russian lines and deliver it to Doenitz. He was still making his way north when Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun took poison and Hitler's chauffeur went about the gruesome business of burying the bodies. Before Zander had reached his destination a telegram from Bormann reached Doenitiz. "Grand Admiral Doenitz," it read, "in place of the former Reichs-

marshal Goering the Fuehrer appoints you as his successor. Written authority is on the way. . . ."

Doenitz was as yet unaware of Hitler's death. But the contents of the telegram radically changed the situation in the new government district of Flensburg. Doenitz was the heir-apparent. Himmler's hopes were dashed. A few hours later Bormann sent a second telegram. Although it still did not mention Hitler's death, it said: "The testament is in force." If there were any doubts left, an unequivocal message from Goebbels finally dispelled them. "The Fuehrer died yesterday at 15.30 hours," Goebbels wired before poisoning himself, his wife and their six children. Doenitz was the new Fuehrer.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

HEINRICH HITZINGER

HIMMLER was moody, unstable as usual, alternating between fits of depression and outbursts of wild optimism. On the face of it he was a thoroughly discredited, unimpressive, futile figure—but he was still Heinrich Himmler. Wherever he went the formidable array of his entourage accompanied him. The well-armed giants of his Escort Battalion were a powerful force. As late as the afternoon of 30 April even Doenitz was still paying him tribute and called on him at Lübeck to discuss the situation. On his return to his own H.Q., however, Doenitz found the telegram from Berlin which made an end of Himmler's (false) pretences to the succession of Hitler. How would Himmler take the news? Doenitz's apprehension —nay, fear—are reflected in the account of his adjutant and in the notes which Doenitz dictated after the critical meeting between himself and Himmler. "Get Himmler to call on me tonight!" Doenitz ordered. "Uncertain how Himmler would react," Walter Luedde-Neurath notes, "and following the warning of a Gauleiter who knew more about the internal struggles for political power, the Grand Admiral took precautions."

He ordered his barrack to be surrounded by a guards commando of reliable U-boat crews. "I had difficulty," Luedde recalled, "in restraining these men who were devoted to Doenitz and itching for action." He posted them as unobtrusively as possible, he added, so as to avoid the meeting taking place in an atmosphere of suspicion. Doenitz was, of course, afraid lest his eager U-boat men would prematurely clash with Himmler's ribald S.S. unit and be routed. A resolute Himmler could quickly turn the tables on him. But Himmler was not resolute. "I talked to Himmler alone in my room," Doenitz recorded in a memorandum about the meeting; "I thought it wiser to keep my revolver hidden under a sheet of paper on my desk. I gave him the telegram to read. He grew pale. He pondered. Then he got up and congratulated me. . . ." Heavily Himmler said: "Well, then, let me be the second man in the State." Doenitz refused. In a conversation lasting half an hour he tried to explain to Himmler that he would form an unpolitical government—if there was to be any government at all. Himmler, in turn, pressed his claim for inclusion in such a government.

"He told me that great advantages would go with his person." To Doenitz's surprise Himmler earnestly claimed that his name carried much weight abroad. "He left me," Doenitz recorded, "between 2 and 3 a.m. in the full knowledge that I would not use him in a prominent position."

But Doenitz did not have the courage to dissociate himself completely from the dejected Himmler. "I could not part company with him," he said feebly, "because the police were in his hands. Mark you," he concluded a little unconvincingly, "at the time I knew nothing about the concentration-camp atrocities and the extermination of the Jews!"

While this conversation was in progress Luedde spent anxious moments trying to entertain a sullenly menacing group of S.S. leaders who had arrived with Himmler. Silently they accepted his hospitality in the makeshift mess. There was no saying what they would do next. Luedde sighed with relief when Himmler emerged from the interview with Doenitz and, together with his uncanny party, disappeared into the night. That, he thought, was the last of Himmler. He was wrong; Himmler was by no means prepared to take no for an answer. He did not think it was the end when, next morning, he heard the German wireless announcing: "It is reported from Fuehrer H.Q. that our Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, fighting against bolshevism to his last breath, has died for Germany in his command post in the Reich Chancellery this afternoon. On 30 April the Fuehrer designated Grand Admiral Doenitz as his successor."

Himmler decided to keep in touch. He appointed Hans Pruetzmann, so-called commander of the "Werewolves," to be his liaison officer at the new Fuehrer's H.Q. He ordered all Ohlendorf's available Security Service agents to keep an eye on developments. They told him that the full text of Hitler's testament had reached Doenitz, that it contained his expulsion from the Party and a list of names, including Bormann and Goebbels, whom Hitler had designated as ministers of Doenitz's administration. It did not take him long to find out that Doenitz had decided to disregard these last instructions of Hitler—Goebbels had written that he was taking his life and there was no news of Bormann—and to nominate his own ministers.

Schellenberg later claimed that he and Himmler had persuaded Doenitz to choose Count Schwerin Krosigk as Foreign Minister, but Schellenberg had only been concerned with his own affairs and obtained permission to continue negotiations with Bernadotte. It enabled him to travel to Stockholm as "Special Envoy" and thus remove himself temporarily from the scene of his country's collapse and from the accusing eyes of Heinrich Himmler, who now blamed him for his disgrace. The two never met again, although Schellen-

berg returned from Sweden to be arrested and imprisoned as a war criminal.

Unwilling to rely on Pruetzmann's reports, Himmler called at Doenitz's H.Q. several times. Uninvited, he gave Doenitz and his new ministers the benefit of his advice and his views. He still maintained that he, Himmler, was obviously the most suitable German emissary to meet Montgomery and Eisenhower. There could be no doubt that as "guarantors of order and security in Central Europe" he and his S.S. were indispensable. Differences between East and West would develop so quickly that he and the S.S. would be *das Zuenglein an der Waage* (holding the balance) within three months. Anyway, he would use Norway and Bohemia as pawns to extract useful concessions from the Allies. . . . Doenitz shrugged his shoulders. It was an embarrassing situation. Himmler would not go. He was talking, talking, talking. On 3 May, in conversation with Doenitz, he blurted out that he, after all, had put out the first capitulation feelers via Sweden—the very fact which he had so emphatically denied a few days earlier. Doenitz pricked up his ears—this gave him at last a pretence to employ strong words instead of feeble hints. "Anybody who has lied to me once, will do it again," he said. Himmler made no reply. Doenitz plucked up courage. "Anybody who is a traitor once, is ready to betray a second time."

Like a beaten dog, his tail between his legs, Himmler hurried to enlist Schwerin Krosigk's help. But Schwerin Krosigk, having secured his appointment, no longer wanted to be embarrassed by Himmler's friendship either. *"Lieber Reichsfuehrer,"* he said, "you must understand that the day is fast approaching when the leaders of the Third Reich will have to account to the German people for their administration." Most Nazi leaders were preparing such "accounts." Making his point still clearer, Schwerin Krosigk continued: "They will have to bear the responsibility for the measures which they have taken and will have to answer the grave accusations of the enemy's propaganda!" Now it dawned on Himmler that his erstwhile friend was somewhat ominously referring to S.S. atrocities. "They will never discover me," he said; but Krosigk was not certain whether he was referring to the Allies or to the German people. "Political developments are going to be in my favour. I shall go into hiding to await them!"

Himmler had no intention of "accounting" to the German people. He had quietly dropped the idea of dying in battle on the Eastern Front. Wolff said that he obviously believed in the plan for a redoubt in the Austro-Bavarian Alps. Originally it had been planned that the German armies in Italy should withdraw into the Austro-Bavarian mountains, where they could hold out for some time. Hitler's and Goering's treasures had been moved south;

Kaltenbrunner had chosen the Austro-German frontier region as his last field of operation and for a few days continued to terrorize the disintegrating Nazi organization. Skorzeny and his unit had made for the southern mountains. If he could make his way there...

With Himmler out of the way Doenitz had established contact with Field-Marshal Montgomery's H.Q. On 4 May the Field-Marshal reported to General Eisenhower's Supreme H.Q. that all German forces in Holland, North-west Germany and Denmark had surrendered unconditionally—the surrender to become effective at 8 a.m. on 5 May. Admiral von Friedenburg, Doenitz's Chief of Staff, and General Jodl were sent to allied headquarters to sign the instrument of surrender. It was arranged that Doenitz's Flensburg administration should retain a measure of authority while the terms of the surrender were being carried out according to Montgomery's orders.

On the evening of 5 May Himmler assembled his closest friends around him. His brother was with him; so was Professor Karl Gebhardt, Dr. Brandt, his secretary, Pruetzmann, and his adjutants, Werner Grothmann and Macher. Himmler had an air of mystery about him. Once or twice he hinted that fate had chosen him for a great new task. He would not say what it was. "For years I have borne a great burden," he said, but even his intimates were getting a little tired of his planning and scheming, which seemed so futile now. Their embarrassed silence did not dismay him. "This new great task I shall have to undertake alone. One or two of you perhaps can accompany me." That, clearly, was a farewell speech. The men around Himmler had recently listened to several of his emotional outbursts. Now they did not pay much attention. But next morning he was gone. Macher and Werner Grothmann had disappeared with him.

One after another of the fallen Nazi idols, S.S. generals, Party officials and the toadies around them were caught in the allied net. Gradually Himmler's men were being gathered in. His brother Gebhard was among them, although he had taken off his S.S. colonel's uniform. Pruetzmann was caught. Ohlendorf began his imprisonment which was to end with his execution in 1951. In the south Kaltenbrunner fell into allied hands.

Skorzeny gave himself up (and lived to write a much-disputed account of his wartime experiences). Dr. Rudolf Brandt was captured. "Harmless fool," Wolff said about him later, "he kept notes which he should have destroyed; it cost him his head!" Wolff himself was soon under arrest. There was no sign of Heinrich Himmler. "The hunt for Himmler is on!" said the headlines. "Himmler has escaped and is making his way to Japan!" was another version. Where was Himmler?

"They will never discover me," he had told Schwerin Krosigk. "They will never discover me," he had told Macher—Major Macher, who had carried out many confidential assignments for his chief. "You and Grothmann are to accompany me!" His plans were made. Some months ago, visiting the office of Heinrich Mueller at Gestapo headquarters in Berlin, he had casually picked up a small document from Mueller's desk. It was the identity card of a rural policeman by the name of Heinrich Hitzinger who had been indicted for defeatism and sentenced to death by the People's Court. On an impulse Himmler had put the card into his pocket and kept it. "I shall assume a new identity," he told Macher. "From now on I am Heinrich Hitzinger. *Ich habe eine Legitimation!*" (I have an identity card). Hurriedly he shaved off his little moustache, put a black patch over his eye. He donned an old uniform—there was nothing now to distinguish him from the rural policeman he pretended to be. With Macher and Werner Grothmann, similarly camouflaged as harmless gendarmes, he mingled with the milling multitude of self-demobilized German troops returning from the crumbled front-line, the slave workers who had thrown off their chains and were making for home, the tens of thousands of evacuees who were streaming back to the bomb-blasted cities. Three vagrant nonentities were lost among a million people without identity.

For many months Heinrich Himmler had not seen his wife, Marga, who had stayed at Lindenfycht, Tegernsee, in Bavaria, while he had been in the north. But the mother of his two illegitimate boys had never been far away, and when he went to Lübeck he arranged for her and the boys to remain near him. Now, with Macher and Grothmann, he decided to lie low in her rooms until the hue and cry had died down. There has been much speculation about the last two weeks of Himmler's life and his movements from the day he "disappeared" from Flensburg. "When they discussed Himmler's fate," an S.S. officer told me, "S.S. men, in these first few bewildering days of defeat, had rather romantic notions about his underground existence!" There was indeed some romance about it—but romance of a different order. The Reichsfuehrer S.S. did not have recourse to his Gestapo tricks to outwit the allied search parties, nor his S.S. courage to meet his enemies face to face. Like a cheap little gangster, he went into hiding at the home of his moll. He waited until he thought it was safe to leave for the south; they would never recognize him! He had not gone far when he arrived at a British Army check-point at Bremervorde. Two tired sentries hardly looked up when he presented himself. "Here is my identity card," he said.

Identity card? Uniform? "Just wait a minute." One of the sentries called the sergeant. "You are a policeman, Heinrich

Hitzinger? We have orders to detain all Germans in uniform." Himmler had no English. He did not understand. "Come inside, all three of you," the sergeant ordered, pointing to the shed. Himmler-Hitzinger was trembling. His whole body was shaking. With glassy eyes, his mouth twitching, he turned to his *aides*. The two tough S.S. officers stared back at him. He seemed to plead with them silently. The sergeant was puzzled. "It's no use!" Himmler said at last. He had lost his nerve. "I am Heinrich Himmler," he whispered. Contemptuously the two *aides* turned away from their Reichsfuehrer.

A minute later the telephone wires were humming. It did not take long before the news had reached Colonel Murphy, Chief of Intelligence at Field-Marshal Montgomery's headquarters. An hour later his car came to a stop in front of the Bremervorde shed in which Himmler cowered in the corner, a nervous wreck in a state of collapse. "Strip him!" Colonel Murphy ordered. "See whether he's got any poison on him! Don't give him his clothes back!" After a weak protest Himmler stripped. Quietly he allowed himself to be searched. "Take this!" He was offered a British battledress. *"Nein! Nein!"* he protested. He would not put it on. He was gesticulating and talking wildly; they could hardly understand a word. Only slowly it dawned on them what was on his mind. "You want to catch me in a British uniform," Himmler was saying, "so you can shoot me as a spy!" There was a glint of triumph in his eye. He had seen through "this infamous British plot" to murder him. The fool! No one was more anxious to keep him alive than his captors! Rather than take the Army blouse, he accepted a khaki shirt, a pair of pants, socks and marching boots. He was shivering. "Give him a blanket," ordered Colonel Murphy, "and let's get to Lüneburg as quickly as possible."

Heinrich Himmler, Minister of the Interior, Reichsfuehrer S.S., Commander-in-Chief of the Reserve Army, Chief of the German Police, was on his way—to Lüneburg and to death. There Sergeant-major Austin took charge of him and took him to the neat room with green wallpaper and red-plush chairs—a nice, respectable sort of room. S.S. General Daluege had already passed through that room as a prisoner. Former Secretaries of State, ex-ministers, had been held there. Here Hans Pruetzmann had taken his life a few days earlier. Here Heinrich Himmler crunched the capsule of cyanide, here they lifted him up by his legs, slapped him unceremoniously on his back and on his stomach to make him disgorge the poison. Here he died within a few minutes. The date was 23 May, 1945. For two days he was lying there, covered with a British Army blanket. A few curious soldiers came to get a glimpse of the dead monster. Gebhard Himmler identified his late brother and duly signed the papers.

Two days later Austin received orders to bury the body. "I wrapped him up in a couple of blankets," Austin told me. "Then I put two of our Army camouflage nets around him and tied him up with telephone wires." He put the parcel, as he called it, on the back of a lorry and drove off. "I had to dig his grave myself," he added; "nobody will ever know where he is buried."

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INDEX

Abwehr (Defence), 93, 199, 214
Abyssinia, 90
Acropolis, 15
Africa, 27
Afrika Korps, 204
Agram, 171
Ahnenerbe, 95-97, 118, 177, 179, 186, 235
Aigen Castle, 188, 190
Alexander, King of Jugoslavia, 204
Allies, the, 131, 144, 159, 188, 203, 204, 209, 215, 218, 220, 222, 229
Alsace, 231
Alzen, 137
"Am Dohnenstag," 61
American War Crimes Branch, 53, 232
Amsterdam, 170
Angriff, Der, 78
Anhalt, 58
Ankara, 225
Ansbach, 18
Anschluss, Austrian, 106
Antwerp, 231
Ardennes offensive, 230-232
Argentine, 208
Aspern Aerodrome, 107
Athens, 169
Auschwitz, 53, 129, 137, 165, 169, 170, 171, 173, 183, 187, 192
Austin, Edwin, 9-11, 257, 258
Austria, 52, 69, 88, 90, 100, 105-107, 111, 115, 145
Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, 101
Avenue Foch (Paris), 142
Azov, Sea of, 153

Bach-Zelewski, Erich von dem, 43, 148, 149, 150, 153
Baden, 58
Bad Harzburg, 76
Bad Nauheim, 233
Badoglio, Marshal, 206, 215
Balkans, the, 144, 200, 204, 217, 222, 229
Bartels (architect), 67, 68
Barthels, Dr., 139
Bavaria, 21, 44, 50, 58, 73, 97, 245
Bayrische Motoren Werke, 73
B.B.C. German News Service, 131
Beck, Ludwig, 105, 222
Becker, Rudolf, 166
Begleitkommando, 134
Behrens, Colonel, 92
Beigs, Karl, 146
Belgium, 143, 144, 215, 217
Belgrade, 169
Berchtesgaden, 36, 106, 117, 188, 244, 248
Berchtold (Chief of S.A.), 25
Bergen, 141
Bergen-Belsen, 11, 12, 52, 171, 173, 243
Berger, Gottlob, 118, 148, 206, 245, 246
Berggrav, Bishop, 143
Bergmann, Major, 18, 19, 71
Berlin, 21, 25, 29, 34, 47, 48, 52, 53, 57, 58, 61, 64, 65, 67, 69, 78, 80, 91, 97, 99, 107, 112, 113, 114, 121, 122, 123, 126, 143, 153, 168, 188, 207, 220, 222, 223, 230, 236, 237, 238, 242, 244, 245, 246, 252, 256
Bernadotte, Count Folke, 236-242, 244-248, 253
Best, S. Payne, 131-134, 246
Bielefeld, 25
Bierkamp (S.S. officer), 154
Birkenau, 163, 192
Birkenwald, 67
Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, 18
Black Guards, *see Schutz Staffeln*
Blaskowitz, General, 222
Blomberg, Werner von, 76, 105
Blum, Mme, 246
Blum, Leon, 246
Bocchini (Italian Police Minister), 100
Bodenschatz, Karl, 189
Boehm, Georg, 169
Bohemia, 191, 205, 217, 254
Bohle, Ernst, 88-90
Bolshaya Sovetskaya Street, 164
Bonaparte, Napoleon, 124
Boris, King of Bulgaria, 215, 216
Bormann, Martin, 116, 203, 205, 226, 227, 228, 230, 231, 233, 234, 241, 248-251, 253
Brack, Dr. Viktor, 184

Bram (guard in Russian P.O.W. camp), 164
Brandt, Dr. Karl, 182, 194, 195, 215, 216
Brandt, Dr. Rudolf, 127, 178, 180, 182, 239, 247, 255
Brauchitsch, General Walter von, 132
Braun, Eva, 188, 213, 248, 250
Brazil, 176
Bremen, 58, 247
Bremer, General, 153
Bremervorde, 256, 257
Breslau, 48
Brezany Castle (Czechoslovakia), 193
Briennerstrasse (Munich), 50
Britain, Battle of, 193
British Broadcasting Corporation, 195
British Embassy at The Hague, 131
British Empire, 209
British Expeditionary Force, 193
British Home Guard, 229
British Intelligence Service, 131, 133, 134, 229
British Second Army, 9, 229
British War Cabinet, 247
British War Office, 10
Bromberg, 25
Bruckau, 139
Brunner, Frieda, 205
Brunswick, 165
Brussels, 144
Brussels Gestapo H.Q., 145
Bryansk, 153
Buchenwald, 52-54, 102, 111, 146, 147, 169, 171, 173, 185
Buckawiecka, Helen, 139
Budapest, 228
Buergerbrau Beerhouse (Munich), 130
Bukharin (prisoner at Moscow trial), 93
Bulgaria, 171, 216
Bulova Hospital (Prague), 194
Burgundy, 213
Busch, General, 153

Cairo, 222
Canaris, Admiral Wilhelm, 91-93, 214, 223, 224
Celle, 173
Chancellery, Austrian, 107
Chancellery, German, 64, 84, 151, 233, 235, 244, 246, 248-250, 253
Charvat (Prague Police President), 193
Cheops Pyramid, 27
Christkoenigsbote, 81
Churchill, Captain Peter, 217, 246
Churchill, Major Randolph, 208
Churchill, Winston, 90, 219, 229, 246
Ciano, Count Galeazzo, 208
Clauberg, Dr. Karl, 184
Clay, General Lucius, 232
Colmar, 231
Cologne, 217
Cologne Cathedral, 81
Communications Office, 39, 118
Concerzowo, Margarete, 25
Copenhagen, 141
Council of Princes, 42
Criminal Police (Kripo), 56, 64, 153, 223
Croatia, 171
Cyril, Prince of Bulgaria, 216
Czech Army in Britain, 195
Czechoslovakia (including Slovakia), 100, 170, 191-193, 195, 197

Dachau, 48-50, 52, 53, 72, 73, 81, 83, 84, 102, 123, 124, 129, 130, 145-147, 171, 175, 176, 179, 182, 225.
Daghestan, 161
Dahlem (Berlin), 61, 219
d'Alquen, Guenther, 14, 32, 61, 78, 86, 87, 89, 108
Daluege, Kurt, 48, 56, 57, 64, 67, 85, 114, 118, 148, 194, 197, 257
Dankwarderode, Burg, 87
Danzig, 114, 125, 197, 233, 240
Darre, R. Walther, 26, 28, 29-32, 37, 38, 41, 68, 76, 78, 118
de Crinis, Professor, 240, 242, 243
Demas, George C., 146
Denmark, 141, 249, 255
"Deutschland" Regiment, 66, 102
Diels, Rudolf, 57, 60, 62
Dietrich, Joseph (Sepp), 22, 34, 37, 45, 55, 56, 65, 79, 117, 119, 140, 142, 209, 240
Dietzsch, Arthur, 185
Dinxperlo (Dutch Frontier), 131
Dirlewanger Brigade, 153
Dnieper, River, 152
Dodd, Thomas J., 146
Doenitz, Grand Admiral, 205, 249-255
Dollfuss, Dr. Engelbert, 69, 110
Dresden, 111

Dulles, Allan Welsh, 242
Dulles, Foster, 242
Dunkirk, 193
Dutch Military Intelligence, 131

Ebensee Concentration Camp, 146
Eberstein, Baron, 79
Eichmann, Karl, 149, 152, 168-171, 188, 201, 204, 216, 235, 236
Eicke, Theodor, 49, 51, 84, 124, 140, 141
Einsatzgruppen, 150, 152-154, 156, 163, 165, 166, 171, 210, 211, 232
Einsatzstab, 143
Einsporn, Fritz, 156
Eisenhower, General, 222, 241, 245, 249, 254, 255
Elias, General, 192
Elser, Georg, 133, 134
England, 30, 89, 221
English Channel, 209
Epp, Franz Ritter von, 45
Eppinger, Professor, 216
Erhard, Hans, 24
Ernst, Karl, 65
Essener National-Zeitung, Die, 78
Europe, 13, 53, 127, 128, 136, 184, 187, 204, 209, 222, 230, 232, 237, 249

Fahrenkamp, Dr. Rudolf, 175-177, 180, 225
Falkenhausen, Alexander von, 144, 145
Faulhaber, Archbishop Cardinal, 71, 176
Fegelein, Herman, 84, 188, 213, 226, 240, 242, 244, 245, 248
Festigung des deutschen Volkstums, see Strengthening of German Folkdom
Figl, Dr. Leopold, 108, 129, 130
Filov (Bulgarian Premier), 216
Finke, Dr., 181, 182
Finland, 204
Flensburg, 244, 247, 251, 255, 256
Flossenburg, 53, 110, 147
Foot, Dingle, 90
Forbes, Rosita, 90
Foster, Arnold, 90
Fouché (eighteenth-century Paris Police Minister), 14, 44, 45
France, 106, 111, 132, 142-144, 193, 217, 222
Franco, General, 124, 143, 213
Frank, Dr. Hans, 128, 163
Frank, Karl Hermann, 62, 191, 196, 197
Franz, Dr., 131
Frauenkirche (Munich), 176
Frederick the Great of Prussia, 68, 218
Freienwalde (Germany), 233
Freud, Sigmund, 90
Frick, Dr. Wilhelm, 46, 58, 78, 202, 205
Friedenburg, Admiral von, 255
Frisch (subaltern Army officer), 105
Frischauer, Willi, 90
Fritsch, Werner von, 105
Fromm, Fritz, 224
Fuschl, 190

Gabcik, Josef, 193
Gatlyn, Sergeant, 164
Gdynia, 240
Gebhardt, Professor Karl, 180-182, 184, 185, 191, 194, 195, 206, 227, 235, 245, 255
Gelderland, 131
German Communist Party, 34
German Embassy, London, 89
German Embassy, Paris, 112
German Foreign Office, 90, 237
German Industrial Artists, Association of, 12
German Navy, 35, 36, 39, 103
German Secret Service, 93
"Germania" Regiment, 66, 102
Gestapo, *see* Secret State Police
Giessler, Paul, 250
Gille, General, 14
Gleiwitz (Polish border), 125, 126
Globocnik, Otto, 107, 162, 166
Gluecks (S.S. officer), 170, 172, 174, 201, 243
Gmünd (Bavaria), 18, 59, 73, 175
Goebbels, Dr. Joseph, 44, 56, 62, 78, 79, 113, 115, 116, 117, 137, 140, 201, 207, 209, 218, 221, 223-225, 230, 243, 245, 248, 251, 253
Goerdler, Dr., 222
Goering, Emmy, 25, 116
Goering, Hermann, 17, 36, 44, 46-48, 53, 56-62, 64, 65, 69, 78, 84, 85, 90, 95, 96, 98, 105-107, 110, 114, 116-118, 134, 135, 137, 141, 144, 171, 172, 189, 201, 203, 205, 209, 216, 224, 225, 227, 243, 245, 246, 248, 250, 251, 254
Goering, Karin, 64
Goethe, 18
Gomel, 152
Gostinin (District of), 139

G.P.U., 91-93
Gran Sasso D'Italia, 207
Grawitz, Dr., 99, 243, 245
Great Britain, 30, 111, 132, 143, 193, 195, 217, 219, 227, 247
Greece, 15, 171
Greese, Irma, 173
Grosch, Lieutenant, 131
Grothmann, Werner, 127, 135, 247, 255, 256
Grynspan, Herschel, 112
Guderian, Heinz, 101, 224
Gusen Concentration Camp, 146
Gymnastics Office, 118

Haagen, Dr. Eugen, 185
Habsburg, House of, 146
Hague, The, 130
Halder (German General Staff), 221
Halle, 35
Hamburg, 36, 37, 52, 58, 66, 102, 141, 197, 249
Handy, Thomas T., 232, 233
Hanfstaengl, Ernst, 36
Hanke, Karl, 250
Haulot, Arthur, 144-146
Haulot, Mme, 144, 145
Hausser, Paul, 239
Haute Savoy Mts., 144
Heiden, Konrad, 122
Heinecke, Arthur, 134
Heines (Chief of Breslau Police), 48
Heinrich, I., 28, 29, 68, 86-88, 123
Heinrici, Gottwald, 236
Herff, Colonel von, 119
Hertogenbosch Concentration Camp (Holland), 53
Hess, Rudolf, 36, 56, 62, 78, 83, 84, 116, 203, 227
Hesse, 58
Hettinger, Johann Michael (great-grandfather), 18
Heyder (Himmler), Anna (mother), 15, 19, 71, 72, 175, 176
Heydrich, Reinhard, 35-40, 42, 44, 46-49, 55, 56, 58, 59-67, 69, 74, 79-81, 85, 88-93, 98, 99, 100, 105, 106, 111-113, 115, 117-119, 124-128, 133, 134, 141-143, 148, 149, 154, 169, 190-199, 200-201, 213, 217, 218, 224,
Hildenbrand (S.S. officer), 197, 198
Himmler, Ernst (brother), 16
Himmler, Gebhard, Jnr. (brother), 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 46, 62, 71-73, 82, 175, 225, 228, 239, 241, 246, 249, 255, 257
Himmler, Gebhard, Senr. (father), 15, 16
Himmler, Gudrun (daughter), 25
Himmler, Johanna Dorothea (great-grandmother), 18
Himmler, Johann Konrad (grandfather), 15, 18
Himmler, Margarete (wife), 25, 97, 256
Hindenburg, Paul von, 41, 44
Hitler, Adolf, 12-14, 17, 21-30, 32, 34-37, 39, 40, 42, 44-49, 55-65, 69, 70, 76, 78, 80-86, 93, 95, 97, 98, 102, 104-106, 111, 113-117, 121, 124, 125, 127, 128, 130-135, 143, 144, 148, 150, 151, 153, 154, 160, 164, 188-191, 194, 195, 197, 200-210, 212, 214-228, 230, 231, 233, 235, 237-246, 248, 250, 251, 253, 254
Hitzinger, Heinrich, 256, 257
Hochwald, 214
Hoellrigel, Alois, 151, 152
Hoettinger, Friedrich, 19
Hoettl, Dr. Wilhelm, 215, 216, 220, 248
Hoffmann (guard in Russian P.O.W. camp), 164
Hoffmann, Adolf, 118
Hoffmann, Heinrich, 226
Hohenberg, Prince Ernst, 146
Hohenberg, Prince Max, 146
Hohenlychen Clinic, 180, 191, 205, 227, 235, 238, 244, 245
Hohenzollern, Royal House of, 17, 18
Holland, 53, 130, 131, 133, 143, 215, 217, 255
Holzloehner, Professor, 181
Horak (Czech soldier), 195
Horthy (Regent of Hungary), 216
Horthy, Nicholas von, 228
Hotel Metropole (Vienna), 108, 109, 110
Hradchin (Prague), 193
Huber, Standartenfuehrer, 108-110
Hungary, 19, 171, 216

Ingolstadt, 22
Inspectorate for Physical Training, 39
Italy, 90, 100, 111, 114, 125, 205-208, 215, 217, 220, 241, 242, 254

Jackson, Justice Robert H., 158

Jaeckeln (S.S. officer), 79
Japan, 255
Jerusalem, Mufti of, 169
Jesus Christ, 27
Jodl, General, 249, 255
Judge Advocate's Office, U.S. Third Army, 146
Junker-Schulen, 42

Kaltenbrunner, Dr. Ernst, 69, 106-108, 128, 197-202, 204, 207, 208, 213-215, 220, 221, 226, 229, 235-237, 239, 241, 242, 243, 245, 255
Kalisch, 139
Kantschuster, Johann, 50, 51
Karl Borromaeus Church (Prague), 195
Karlsbad, 193
Kaufmann, Gauleiter, 249
Keitel, Field-Marshal Wilhelm, 135, 143, 205, 249
Keppler, Wilhelm, 107
Kersten, Felix, 121-123, 124, 127, 142, 188, 190, 194, 195, 198, 201, 202, 203, 213, 214, 219, 226, 229, 243
Kesselring, Field-Marshal, 217, 249
Khan, Gengis, 14
Kharkov, 153, 239
Kiel, 35
Kiene, Agathe (grandmother), 19
Kiev, 153
Kingisepp, 152
Kirmaier, Josef, 107, 127
Kirovograd, 152
Kitzinger, General, 153
Kladno, 195
Klop, Lieutenant, 131, 132
Kluge, Field-Marshal von, 153, 229
Kluge, Paul, 151, 154
Koch, Ilse, 146, 147, 173
Koch (S.S. officer), 146
Kogon, Eugen, 54, 129
Koppe, Wilhelm, 137
Koran, the, 123
Krakow, 128
Krosigk, Count Lutz von Schwerin, 243, 249, 253, 254, 256
Krupp, Gustav von, 120
Kubis, Jan, 193
Kuechler, Field-Marshal, 153
Kurfuerstenstrasse (Berlin), 152, 235

Labour Office, 137
La Glaize, 232
Landra, Professor Guido, 114
Lansberg Prison, 52, 128, 149, 210
Landshut, 19, 20, 22, 34
Langbehn, Dr. Karl, 219-221, 229
Lebensborn, 97-99, 118, 138-140, 196
Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler (L.A.H.), 55, 56, 65, 66, 102, 114, 117, 125, 140, 209, 240
Leningrad, 152
Leopold, King of the Belgians, 229
Ley, Dr. Robert, 42, 116
Lichterfelde Barracks (Berlin), 65
Lidice, 195, 196
Lidice, Mayor of, 195
Liebel, Mayor of Nuremberg, 112
Liebig Apothecary (Munich), 16
Liebigstrasse (Munich), 16
Lindau (Lake Constance), 15
Lindenfycht (Bavaria), 59, 61, 73, 97, 175, 188, 256
Linz (Austria), 152, 235
Lipari Islands, 100
Lisbon, 202, 225
Lodz, 139
Loetzen (East Prussia), 194
Loewe, Heinrich der, 68
London, 50, 195
Lorenz (S.S. officer), 125
Lorenz, Erika, 135
Lorenz, Heinz, 248
Lorrant, Stefan, 50
Lübeck, 58, 245, 246, 249, 250, 252, 256
Lublin, 107, 162, 166, 225
Luedde-Neurath, Walter, 249, 250, 252, 253
Luetzelburg, Dr. von, 176
Luftwaffe, 103, 127, 135, 141, 142, 152, 177, 178, 179, 181, 185, 208, 209, 224, 225, 233, 240, 246
Luxembourg, 143

Macedonia, 171
Machatcha Kala, 161
Macher, Major, 255, 256
Madagascar, 150
Maidaneck, 129, 162, 163, 225
Main Office for Administration and Economy (V.W.H.A.), 12, 118, 119
Malmedy, 232, 233
Mansfeld, Count Coloredo, 193
Manstein, Field-Marshal, 154
Maquis, French, 144
Marburg University, 181

Marienburg, 67
Martini, Colonel, 131
Mauser (guard in Russian P.O.W. camp), 164
Mauthausen, 52, 102, 111, 145, 147, 151, 152, 216
Mecklenburg, 58
Medical Office, 39, 118
Medinet-Gurob, Queen of Egypt, 27
Mehlhorn, 126
Mein Kampf, 27, 43
Menscheneinsatz, Der, 135, 136
Micklas, Wilhelm, 107
Milch, Erhard, 181, 208
Minsk, 155
Mohammed, 123
Montgomery, Field-Marshal Bernard, 229, 240, 254, 255, 257
Montgomery's Headquarters (Luneburg Heath), 9
Moravia, 191, 205
Moravska-Ostrava, 170
Morell, Dr. Theodor, 194, 195, 226
Moscow, 93, 102, 153, 222
Mrugowsky, Professor Joachim, 182, 185
Mueller, Heinrich, 56, 57, 118, 126, 168, 169, 170, 188, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 204, 213, 220, 229, 236, 248, 256
Muff, General, 107
Munich, 15, 16, 19, 25, 34, 36, 37, 43-45, 47-52, 55-58, 59, 66, 71-73, 102, 107, 110, 112, 130, 132-134, 171, 175-177, 182, 230
Munich Police Prison, 49
Munich Senate Hall, 42
Munich Technical High School for Agriculture, 20
Munich-Trudering, 25, 59
Munich University, 15
Munich War Ministry, 21
Murphy, Colonel, 10, 257
Mussolini, Benito, 90, 100, 114, 124, 125, 206-208, 215
Mussolini, Anna Maria, 207
Mussolini, Romano, 207

Narvik, 141, 143
National German Central Office, 119, 125, 137, 138
National Socialist Workers' Party, 24
Natzweiler, 53, 185
Nauen, 245
Naujocks, Alfred Helmut, 125
Nazi-Soviet Pact, 87, 136
Nebe, Arthur, 56, 57, 64, 154, 197-199, 200, 223
Nedich of Serbia, 215
Neff, Walter, 181
Netherlands, 143
Neuengamme, 52
Neurath, Baron Konstantin von, 124, 191, 192
Nibelungs, Sagas of, 16
Nickel, Colonel, 196
Niederdorf, 110
Niederhagen, 52
Nikolaiev, 154
Norway, 141, 143, 144, 222, 249, 254
Novgorod, 152
Nuremberg, 43, 76, 78, 111, 112, 117, 154, 172, 200
"Nuremberg Laws," 78
Nuremberg Trials, 50, 146, 147, 158, 163, 182, 185, 239
Nuremberg Synagogue, 112

Oberg, Karl, 142, 217
Oberhauser, Dr. Herta, 182
Oder, River, 233, 234
Odessa, 152
Ohlendorf, Otto, 152-154, 163, 165, 167, 168, 174, 197-199, 210, 247, 249, 253, 255
Oorschot, Major-General von, 131
Oppeln, 126
Oranienburg, 52
Order Police, 57, 64, 118, 153
Orel, 165
Oslo, 143, 169, 178, 204

Padborg, 244
Paderborn, 67
Pakebusch, Captain, 57
Palestine, 168, 169
Paris, 91, 229
Paris Gestapo Headquarters, 142
Parri (Italian Partisans' Leader), 242
Pavelic, Dr. Ante, 204
Peiper, Joachim, 232, 233
Peipus, Lake, 152
Pentagon (Washington), 247
Pervomaisk, 152
Petit Thier, 232
Petrik (Chaplain of Karl Borromaeus Church), 195
Pfaffenberger, Andreas, 146
Pietra Nemsk, 154

Pohl, Oswald, 12, 13, 99, 119-121, 149, 152, 174, 243
Pokorny, Dr. Adolf, 183
Poland, 53, 100, 113, 114, 115, 121, 125-129, 136-140, 146, 151, 162, 163, 170, 171
Polish Corridor, 114, 125
Polish frontier, 125
Pomerania, 104
Pomorze, 25
Pope, His Holiness, the, 241
Popitz, Dr. Johannes, 220, 221
Posen, 139, 209, 210, 213
Prague, 115, 124, 191-197, 205
Prinz Albrechtstrasse (Berlin), 12, 50, 60, 62, 75, 83, 92, 152, 236
Prinz Albrechtstrasse Palace (Berlin), 107
Prinz Regentenplatz (Munich), 59
Prominenten, 245, 246
Propaganda, Ministry of, 248
Pruetzmann, Hans, 9, 10, 229, 253-255, 257
Prussia, 25, 58, 61, 101, 194, 229
Puetz, Dr., 156, 157
Puschkau, 139, 196

Quartermaster Office, 118
Quedlinburg, 86, 87
Quisling, Vidkun, 204

Race and Resettlement Office (RUSHA), 31-33, 39, 66, 78, 99, 118, 138
Radek, Karl, 93
Radtke, Rudolf, 164
Rascher, Dr. Sigmund, 154, 177-185, 187
Rastenburg, 194, 220, 222, 230
Rath, Ernst von, 112
Rauff (S.S. officer), 166
Ravensbrueck, 52, 147, 182, 184, 197, 217
Redeiss, General, 143
Regensburg, 15, 20
Reichskriegsflagge, 20
Reichs Security Main Office (R.S.H.A.), 67, 78, 118, 128, 166, 167, 176, 187, 197, 198, 200, 202, 214, 222
Reischssicherheits Hauptamt, see Reichs Security Main Office
Reichstag, 29, 34, 44, 47, 133, 148, 221
Reichswehr (German Army), 20, 22, 32, 40, 41, 45, 46, 63, 64, 76, 85, 91-93, 101, 103, 105, 106, 108, 117, 119, 120, 132, 133, 151, 153, 154, 160, 179, 190, 199, 202, 204, 219, 231, 240, 242, 246, 250
Reindl, Fortunat, 19
Remagen, 240
Remer, Otto Ernst, 223
Replacement Office, 118
Resel Street (Prague), 195
Rheinsberg, 249
Rhine, River, 85, 240
Rhineland, the, 85
Rhl, General, 210
Ribbentrop, Frau von, 228
Ribbentrop, Joachim von, 61, 90, 189, 190, 201, 205, 228, 237, 249
Rocca del Caminato (Italy), 207
Roehm, Ernst, 20, 21, 46, 58, 63-65, 73, 93, 103
Roettig, Major-General, 140, 141
Roman Catholic Church, 41, 71, 149
Rome, 16, 100, 149
Rommel, Field-Marshal Erwin, 222, 223
Romilly, Giles, 246
Roper, H. R. Trevor, 82, 227, 240, 244
Rosenberg, Alfred, 26-29, 32, 36, 38, 62, 76, 143, 150, 190
Rostov, 153
Rothschild, Baron Louis von, 108-110
Rovno Ghetto, 156
Rovno, Territorial Commissar of, 156
Royal Air Force, 143
Royal Palace, Sofia, 216
Ruhr, the, 52
Rumania, 142, 154
Rundstedt, Field-Marshal Gerd von, 222, 230, 231
Russia, 91-93, 96, 136, 141, 142, 148-150, 152, 155, 157, 161, 164, 188, 190, 215, 231, 246-248
Russian Army, 152, 209
Ruthenia, 171
Rykov (prisoner in Moscow trial, 1937), 93

St. Martin's Church, Landshut, 23
Sachsenhausen (Oranienburg), 52, 53, 110, 123, 133, 147
Salonika, 171
Salzburg, 188
Samson, Odette, 217
Sarona, German Templar Colony of, 168

Sauer (Maidaneck Commandant), 163
Sauerbruch, Professor, 215, 216
Saxonia, 22, 58
Schaeffer, Dr., 96
Schaemmel, Major (Schellenberg), 131-133
Schellenberg, Walter, 49, 88, 90, 106, 127, 128, 133, 153, 190, 191, 197-199, 202-205, 207-209, 211, 213, 214, 216-220, 223, 226-229, 231, 235-249, 253
Schickelgruber, 17
Schleissheim, 20, 22, 23
Schmauser (S.S. officer), 79
Schmelcher, Police President, 79
Schmidt, Dr. Guido, 110
Schober, Colonel-General, 142
Schorfheide, 64
Schumacher, Dr. Kurt, 146
Schuschnigg, Dr. Kurt von, 71, 106, 108, 109
Schutz Staffeln (S.S.), 14, 21, 22, 29, 30, 32, 36, 46, 48, 58, 63, 75, 94, 101, 117, 119, 125, 135, 142, 153, 159, 161, 164, 179, 204, 219, 232, 240
Schwarze Korps, Das, 14, 78-81, 90, 108, 111, 140, 205, 229
Schwedt, 233
Schwetz, 151
Secret State Police, 11, 14, 47, 50, 53, 56, 59-62, 64, 73, 79, 80, 81, 85, 92, 93, 105, 106, 115, 118, 120, 122, 125, 126, 129, 132-134, 142-145, 152, 153, 168, 169, 191, 192, 194, 201, 205, 216, 217, 219, 220, 222, 232, 236
Security Police (Sipo), 61, 125, 154, 170
Security Service (S.D.), 38, 39, 49, 52, 59, 61, 62, 64, 65, 69, 79, 115, 116, 125, 127, 142, 154, 170, 192, 194, 195, 199, 215, 218, 222
Security Service Main Office, 39, 62, 79, 88
Seidlitz, Captain von, 131
Setzkorn, Franz, 63, 66, 121
Seyss-Inquart, Dr. Arthur, 106, 107
Siberia, 96
Sicherheits Dienst, see Security Service
Siegfried, 65
Siegfried Line, 124, 140
Sievers, Wolfram, 181, 186, 187
Silesia, 240
Simferopol, 154
Skoda Works, 193
Skorzeny, Otto, 207, 208, 213, 214, 223, 228, 232-234, 240, 255
Skubl, Dr. Otto, 107
Sluzk, 155, 162
Smolensk, 152, 164
Social Services Office, 39
Sofia, 215, 216
Sollmann, Max, 196
Sovietized Police, 14
Spain, 143
Speer, Albert, 205, 208
S.S. Justice Department, 39, 118
Stahlecker, 154
Stalin, Joseph, 91-93, 247
Stalingrad, 201, 202
Stauffenberg, Alexander, Count von, 223
Stauffenberg, Alexandra, Countess von, 223
Stauffenberg, Clemens, Count von, 223
Stauffenberg, Elisabeth, Countess von, 223
Stauffenberg, Inez, Countess von, 223
Stauffenberg, Klaus, Count von, 222-224
Stauffenberg, Maria, Countess von, 223
Stauffenberg, Maria Gabriele, Countess von, 223
Stauffenberg, Markwart, Count von, 223
Stauffenberg, Otto Philip, Count von, 223
Stavanger, 141
Steiner, Felix, 239, 244
Stennes, S.A. Leader, 48
Stephens, Major R. H., 131-134, 246
Stickstoff, GmbH (Nitrogen, Ltd.) of Schleissheim, 20
Stockholm, 202, 225, 247, 253
Stosstrupp Hitler, 21
Stoumont, 232
Strasbourg University, 187
Strasser, Gregor, 23, 24, 48, 63, 65
Strasser, Otto, 48, 134
Strauss, Dr. Alfred, 50
Streicher, Julius, 76-78, 80, 81, 111, 112, 169
Strengthening of German Folkdom, 119, 137
Stroop, Major-General, 158-160
Stuermer, Der, 76-78, 80, 169

Stumpfegger, Dr. Ludwig, 227
Sudetenland, 115
Swatoboritz Internment Camp, 197
Sweden, 64, 236, 239, 249, 254
Swedish Consulate (Lübeck), 246
Switzerland, 134, 237, 242
Szepalsky (guard in Russian P.O.W. camp), 164

Taganrog, 153
Tallinn, 152
Tannenberg, Battle of, 41
Tegernsee, 18, 59, 73, 175
Teheran, 222
Tel Aviv, 168
Telford Taylor, 183, 185
Terboven, Josef, 144
Teutonic Knights, 41, 67
Thebes, 15
Theresienstadt Road (Prague), 193
Thermopylae, Pass of, 15
Thierack (Reich Minister of Justice), 173, 221
Thomas, Dr., 154
Thomas, General, 154
Thuringia, 22, 58
Tibet, 96
Tiergartenstrasse (Berlin), 89
Tito, Josip Broz, 208, 215, 228
Toelz, 42, 43
Tomashov, 140
Torquemada, Thomas (fifteenth-century Inquisitor-General of Spain), 14, 44, 45
Transylvanian Alps, 215
Treblinka, 162, 163, 171
Trogerstrasse, 177, 178
Trondheim, 141, 143
Trotsky, 91
Tuka (Premier of Slovakia), 170
Tukhachevsky, Mihail N., 91-93
Tunisia, 204
Tyrol, 124, 125

Ueberschaer, Captain, 196
Uelzenerstrasse (Lüneberg), 9
Ukraine, the, 152, 154, 162, 214
United States of America, 111, 209, 247

Vatican, the, 71
Venlo, 132, 133
Versailles, Treaty of, 92
Verwaltungs und Wirtschafts Hauptamt, see Main Office for Administration and Economy
Vichy, 170
Victoria, Queen of England, 18
Vienna, 69, 107, 109, 110, 111, 162, 171, 207, 216, 240
Voelkischer Beobachter, Der, 23, 24, 47, 78, 134, 162, 205, 225
Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle, see National German Central Office
Volkssturm, 229
Vyasma, 153, 164
Vyshinsky, Andrei, 92, 93

Waldeck, Prinz zu, 79
Waldmann, Paul Gottlieb, 165
Wanne, 232
Wannsee (Berlin), 207, 237
Ward Price, British Correspondent, 125
Warsaw, 160, 162, 169
Warsaw Ghetto, 158-160
Washington, 247
Wehrmacht (Armed Forces), 55, 117, 121, 124, 125, 127, 129, 135, 137, 140-144, 150, 153, 155, 159, 163, 167, 168, 171, 182, 186, 189, 201, 205, 208, 209, 215, 224, 230, 234, 237, 240
Weichs, Baron Maximilian von, 153
Weimar, 24, 52
Weiss, Manfred, 216
Wells, C. J. L., 10
Wernerbach (prisoner in Buchenwald camp), 146
Werewolves, 9, 229, 230
Western Europe, 14
Western German Army, 14
Westphalia, 67, 243
Wewelsburg, 68, 118, 121, 148, 247
Whitehall (London), 247
Wiessee, 65, 73
Wilhelmstrasse (Berlin), 62, 75
Wisliceny, Dieter, 149, 168, 170, 171
Wittelsbach, Prince Heinrich of Bavaria, 16
Wittelsbach, Royal House of, 17
Wittje (S.S. officer), 78
Witzleben, General von, 223
Wolf, Karl, 14, 45, 46, 51, 59, 61-63, 67, 68, 71, 72, 75, 79, 88, 89, 95, 100, 107-110, 116, 118, 119, 121, 122, 127, 128, 135, 138, 142, 148-150, 162, 166, 172, 181, 188 192, 194-198, 204, 206, 208, 210, 216, 217, 220, 228, 231, 239, 241, 242, 245, 247, 254, 255

Wolfschanze, 194, 214, 215
Woman Gestapo, 205
World War, First, 13, 27, 41, 45, 83, 103, 148, 209
World War, Second, 209
Wuest, Dr. Walther, 95, 96
Wulff, Wilhelm, 197, 202, 220, 226, 248
Württemberg, 58
Zagreb, 204
Zamorski, General, 114
Zander, Rudolf, 250
Zator Castle (Poland), 137
Zhitomir, 188
Zieris, Franz, 145
Zurich, 202
Zutphen, 131
Zvetkov, Dr. H. I., 165